



A GUIDE TO THE NEW BELONGINGS APPROACH

A Way Forward for Care Leavers

2016



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INTRODUCTION

We are pleased to present this guide on the New Belongings approach and methodology to local authorities and others working to improve their services to care leavers. It was wonderful to experience the enthusiasm and passions expressed during this project. Once people are given the time to share experiences and thoughts, inspiration comes to us all. Many of the care leavers who came to our dissemination events, cluster meetings or trainings had never had the opportunity to attend such events and we hope they are the first of many. Their voices were powerful. We assisted all participating local authorities to develop care leaver forums that link into corporate parenting boards and gave them a voice in issues concerning the service they receive. We also worked with all participants to undertake a survey and create a plan with up to 12 milestones to be achieved during the year. Our intention has been to change thinking and culture; to foster aspiration and the highest possible standards; not settling for life on benefits.

Without the participation of local authorities and their care leavers working alongside our Care Leaver Panel and Facilitators, this project could not have happened. Like in so many other areas of life, we are stronger when we communicate and share. Corporate parenting is a national responsibility, not only a local one. Our gratitude goes out to all of you who have shared this journey with us and it is our hope that through using this Guide many others will take on our approach to enrich the lives of their care leavers.

We urge you to think longer term; not just one year. Integrate this approach into your culture and ensure it is 'future-proofed' by raising it in every meeting and enshrining it in new policy documents. Staff and elected members move on and change. The care leavers are constantly present and deserve a consistent and responsive service. By really listening to them, treating them all as individuals and ensuring they are known, cared for, cared about and enabled to care for themselves, you will be perpetuating the message of New Belongings and delivering to the Care Leavers Charter which inspired the New Belongings Project. Be willing to share within your region and encourage others to follow our methodology to continue to empower all care leavers.

Always ensure that your Chief Executive Officer (CEO) is aware of their responsibility as a corporate parent, not just towards looked after children but when they leave care. Our experience was that without the support of the CEO, Lead Council member and Senior managers, progress was slower and not as fully integrated into the culture. Remember that if what you are doing is not good enough for your own children it certainly is not good enough for your care leavers.

Liz Lyden

Trustee, Chair of the New Belongings Steering Group on behalf of The Care Leavers' Foundation

Purpose of the Guide

This guide provides information on the approach used to improve services to care leavers through the [New Belongings project](#). The project was run in two phases in 2013/14 and 2015/16, with funding to [The Care Leavers' Foundation](#) provided by the Department for Education (DfE). The aim of the project was for local authorities to improve services for care leavers by applying the experience and expertise of care leavers themselves to drive change.



The inspiration for New Belongings came from a group of care leavers, supported by The Care Leavers' Foundation, who met regularly with the Minister for Children.

New Belongings was the third in a series of initiatives that resulted in the Charter for Care Leavers (2013)¹ and the Access All Areas² campaign. The New Belongings Project aimed to:

- Embed the principles of the Charter for Care Leavers
- Join up services to care leavers, as outlined in the Access All Areas report
- Bring in the energy of local communities to support care leavers

The project has shown it is possible to establish effective approaches and services to improve outcomes for care leavers. This guide provides many examples of changing practices and successful outcomes in the 29 authorities that participated in the two phases of the project including one authority, Trafford, that Ofsted described as making progression towards a 'gold standard' in care leaving services.

We are pleased the Government now plans to introduce new legislation. This Guide should be read in that context. We hope the New Belongings approach may help authorities focus their strategies to meet the obligations to care leavers, some of which are being proposed by this future legislation.

¹ [The Charter for Care Leavers](#) is a list of promises for central and local government to make to young people moving out of care. Click the link for the full text of the Charter.

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/264694/Care_leavers_charter.pdf

² *Access All Areas*, Care Leavers' Foundation, NCAS, Princes Trust, ANV, 2012

How to Use this Guide

This two-part guide gives information to enable those who deliver services for care leavers to use the New Belongings approach and methodology to improve their services, with the help of their care leavers.

Part I sets out and explains:

- The New Belongings Vision and Approach
- The Gold Standard
- The New Belongings Methodology and how to implement it
- Guidance on Delivering New Belongings to Care Leavers
- How to Assess Progress towards a Gold Standard in Services to Care Leavers

Part II provides:

- Examples of Changing Practice by Local Authorities from the project
- Appendices providing additional information and resources



“All young people leaving care deserve the best possible support to enable them to reach their full potential. The New Belongings project, which emerged from conversations I had with a group of care leavers and ran over three years, puts care leavers at the heart of Local Authority activity to improve outcomes for them. This event is an invaluable way of learning from the councils involved in the project, working hard to put the voices of care leavers right at the centre of their improvement plans.” **Minister for Children, Edward Timpson MP, speaking about the New Belongings Dissemination Event, A Way Forward for Care Leavers held on 8 July 2016 at City Hall, London.**



Part I – NEW BELONGINGS



1.1 Vision and Approach



The New Belongings vision is for local authorities to improve outcomes for their care leavers by using the experience and wisdom of care leavers themselves to make decisions about services provided to them. Therefore, the willingness of an authority to listen to and engage actively with care leavers is absolutely essential.

A local authority using the New Belongings approach would demonstrate from the outset:

- visible commitment to improve services to its care leavers including the support of the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and Leader for the Council
- signing up to and meeting the principles of the Charter for Care Leavers and Access All Areas
- willingness to use the experience of care leavers to guide decisions of the authority about how to improve those services
- the resources and energy to implement the changes needed

The New Belongings project was essentially a self-help process for local authorities committed to improving services to care leavers.

1.2 The Gold Standard

Each of these conditions would be reflected in the preparations an authority makes to adopt the New Belongings approach and sets the basis for implementation of the methodology. The end result of following this process should be that your care leavers feel they have experienced the benefit of the changes. The ultimate aim is for you to strive to reach a *'gold standard'* in care leaving services, where your care leavers are and feel cared for, cared about and able to care for themselves.

Reaching the Gold Standard

We set out to see whether we could define the *'gold standard'* in services for care leavers. This

Towards a Gold Standard in Services to Care Leavers



In its 2015 report giving Trafford an **'outstanding'** rating for its care leaver services, Ofsted said:



*"Progression to a **'gold standard'** service has been due in part to the opportunity seized by senior managers to participate in the national New Belongings project."*



"Participation in the New Belongings project has enabled a systemic focus on the priorities set as a result of the consultation with care leavers, and all of these have been achieved."

is expressed better as moving towards the *'gold standard'* as the emphasis should be on striving to improve and not any absolute standard.

Our view is that progress towards a *'gold standard'* has to be measured and defined by the quality of experience of care leavers – the experience that they have of how well the process of leaving care works for them. This will reflect the preparation they get before leaving care as well as the services and support they get as they leave care. It is the quality of their experience that sets the *'gold standard'* and not processes, procedures or initiatives.

From the care leavers' point of view, this means their experience and knowledge should be understood and acted on.

From the point of view of those providing services, this means that services have to be built round the needs and experience of care leavers. Services need to be responsive to the views of care leavers both as individuals and as groups. The response should be based on "would I do this for children in my family?".

From the point of view of those assessing the quality of services for care leavers, such as OFSTED, the quality of their experience must be assessed in its totality. The quality of their experience can be characterized in the phrase “cared for, cared about and able to care for themselves”.

“*Cared for*” is about meeting the needs of care leavers, as younger and older adults, and includes:

- being educated to their potential
- being helped into work
- being healthy
- living in suitable and affordable housing;
- having an adequate level of income
- being informed and supported

“*Cared about*” means an individual care leaver knows there are people on whom he or she can count for emotional support, help and advice when they need it – now and into the future.

“*Able to care for themselves*” is about being able to manage day-to-day life and being capable of taking decisions. Seeking to build the resilience to cope with demanding situations needs to be combined with access to support when it is needed later in life.

It is possible to describe approaches and services that can help to achieve this and there are many examples from authorities in the New Belongings project.³ The starting and finishing point is that care leavers must be central to the decisions about services – decisions both about them as individuals and about overall services to care leavers. It is also important to include older care leavers, who may no longer be receiving services, in key discussions and to use their experience to help facilitate the views of younger care leavers. We hope that by following the New Belongings methodology, you will make progress towards reaching your own ‘*gold standard*’ in care leaving services.

³ See [Part II](#) of this Guide for Examples of Changing Practice from the New Belongings project.

New Belongings Vision Improving Services to Care Leavers



Care leavers should feel:

Cared for

Cared about

Able to care for themselves



2. METHODOLOGY

There are six steps in the New Belongings Methodology. The aim is for authorities to develop a plan tailored to their local context that puts the experience of care leavers in the area at the centre of decisions about services.

The six steps are to:

- i. Undertake a [survey of local care leavers](#) to understand well the priorities for improvement

Prepare a [plan for improvement](#) reflecting good practice, guidance and legislation and better understanding of local needs gained from the three previous steps

- ii. Establish a [forum of care leavers](#) to help the authority in shaping decisions about changes to services

- iii. Conduct a [review of the role and experience of Personal Advisers \(PAs\)](#) to be clear how the support given by PAs meets the needs of care leavers

- iv. Obtain the [support of the senior leadership](#), and especially the Chief Executive, to join up the services of the council and its partners to make corporate parenting a reality

- v. Use the [influence of the political leadership of the council](#) to engage the wider community to enable care leavers to participate fully in their communities

Figure 1 - New Belongings Methodology



An outline of each step now follows.

2.1 Survey of Care Leaver Needs

The aim of conducting a survey of care leavers is to improve understanding of the issues that concern them. The questions used in the survey by authorities in the New Belongings project are set out in [Appendix A](#). The questions are deliberately open-ended and not too detailed.

Ideally, the survey would cover as many of your care leavers in as wide a range of circumstances and care placements as possible, including the harder to reach. We found that the better the level of contact and trust existing between the care leaving service and local care leavers, the easier this is to achieve. Conducting the survey in itself could be used to get across the message that the authority wants to engage local care leavers in the task of improving services. It could also be used to encourage care leavers to engage and participate in a [Care Leavers' Forum](#).

It is important to assess the position of care leavers in a range of circumstances and particularly those who might be more isolated and/or who may need assistance in providing their views e.g. due to communications impairment. Authorities need to decide their own approach to contacting care leavers, recognizing that not all care leavers would welcome being asked for their views at this stage in their lives. A variety of ways to contact them could be used. The survey could be completed in person or by post, email or text. For example, some authorities incorporated the survey into regular reviews with care leavers. Others used informal groups of care leavers to discuss the questions and get an understanding of what their care leavers felt about the service being provided to them.

The task of doing the survey in itself should not be underestimated. [Appendix B](#) describes the feedback from some of the authorities in phase 1 of the project⁴. Experience from the project was that authorities did find the results of the surveys useful in establishing priorities for action – especially when combined with discussions with care leavers about what exactly the results showed. We found there was also quite a lot of consistency between a number of key issues that came out of surveys from across authorities, such as loneliness and the need for much better preparation for care leavers before they left care (and much earlier in their experience of being in care).

⁴See <http://newbelongings.org.uk/new-belongings-project/project-history> for information about Phase 1 of the New Belongings Project.

2.2 New Belongings Plan

A critical component of the New Belongings approach is a basic plan that sets out: what the authority would do to improve services to care leavers; how those improvements would be achieved; who would be responsible for the actions to deliver those improvements; and the target deadlines.

Contents of the plan

Adhering to the steps in the methodology, the plan would reflect the results of the survey of local care leavers and discussions with them in Care Leaver Forums, and formal and informal settings. It would be set in the context of the individual authority and the nature and quality of its existing services. The focus would be on the key priorities to improve services to care leavers. It should be both realistic about what could be achieved in a limited time period and demanding in what it seeks to achieve, especially regarding the part local care leavers can play in the decisions of the local authority.

The content of the plan would reflect the wide responsibility of the local authority to care leavers beyond the statutory age requirements. Planning for life beyond care needs to incorporate commitment to:

- a safe and positive experience of care, being healthy and having a sense of well-being
- emotional and practical support, ensuring that additional individual needs are met e.g. those arising from a disability or accommodation
- full information and education about what services are available to enable them to live a healthy independent life
- addressing the stigma of the care experience
- raising aspirations and encouragement to take up opportunities, to achieve and attain to the best of their ability in education and in other activities; offering a second, third and fourth chance if initial plans do not work out
- helping care leavers learn the skills to become employable through work experience and apprenticeships
- helping with access to further and higher education and providing mentoring support



- encouragement and support to communicate directly, in person and online, to reduce isolation, find support and an advocate where necessary; access to information
- support from family, friends and sibling relationships and for returning home if that has been agreed
- good preparation for their responsibilities after leaving care, such as managing money and accommodation; support tenancies to prevent homelessness
- shaping services through consultation with care leavers whose diverse experience in different care settings needs to be taken into account and includes: Section 20, living at home under a care order, kinship care, foster care, residential care (local authority, private and voluntary sector), youth justice system, boarding school, out of authority placements and varies according to different needs e.g. becoming a parent, disability, learning disability, communications impairment, mental health, drug and alcohol misuse and different status e.g. refugees and asylum seekers
- providing help and support beyond the statutory age limit and encouraging a sense of belonging in the community

Key elements of the plan

Each local authority will have different styles in planning their work and use different formats to set out such information. Two Examples of New Belongings plans are provided as [Appendix C](#). Your New Belongings plan would sit within your overall work plans and would include the following elements:

- a brief, clear statement about what the authority is aiming to achieve and a number of specific objectives (taking into account existing policy and legislation, including the Government’s “Care Leavers’ Strategy”)
- an action plan that describes in more detail how the objectives of the plan will be delivered and sets out what success will mean if it achieves each objective
- a series of actions against each objective that, taken together over time, will mean the objective will be achieved
- sets out who is responsible for each of the actions and the times at which those actions will be taken
- identifies the person who will lead, e.g. head of leaving care team, who will have day to day responsibility for maintaining the New Belongings focus on track; for keeping the



plan up-to-date; and for checking that the actions are being taken and the objectives are being achieved

- consideration of how positive change is embedded and sustained beyond the planning period
- The resources to implement the changes needed - sometimes changes can lead to the reallocation or saving of resources in the longer term. However, the plan needs to be supported by the allocation of sufficient resources including staff to lead the implementation of the plan and Personal Advisers (PA) engaged effectively in related activities

Milestones

It is important to set milestones to help you monitor progress against the agreed plan. There are likely to be many actions in the plan but the milestones are the ones that are critical in making real improvements to the lives of care leavers in the area. Consequently, the choice of milestones would reflect the priorities identified in the surveys of care leavers and discussions with forums of care leavers. Since milestones are the critical outcomes and actions, we suggest there should not be too many – perhaps 10 to 15 over the course of the plan period.

Examples of milestones would be changes that:

- increase the use authorities make of the experience and wisdom of care leavers, such as improvements in the use made in the LA of a Care Leavers Forum
- adapt practices shown to be effective in other authorities, such as agreed protocols and effective arrangements with DWP
- measure improved outcomes for care leavers, such as satisfaction with housing or an increase in the number of care leavers in apprenticeships and a consequent drop in NEETs.

Since the milestones are the most important actions or changes, these can be identified clearly in the plan or set out on a separate list. This could then be used to track and discuss progress being made in your efforts to improve services to your care leavers. Improvements in the priorities set in each authority's plans can be assessed by the achievement of milestones in the plan and changes in statistics such as the percentage of care leavers who are NEET (not in education, employment or training). Authorities should also measure the underlying improvement in the experience of care leavers and in the overall performance of the service.

2.3 A Care Leavers Forum

Given that the voice of the care leaver is at the heart of New Belongings, having an effective forum for them is essential. A Care Leavers Forum is a group of young people who are leaving care or have left care. The forum is brought together to consider the issues affecting care leavers and to give feedback to the local authority and its corporate parenting panel.

While there is no single formula for setting up an effective Care Leavers Forum, there is general agreement on desirable features for it. At the core it needs to reflect serious commitment to an active and on-going process of listening to the views and experiences of care leavers, applying that information to shaping the decisions made about services and feeding back on progress to the care leavers involved. Essential underlying principles include:

- respect for care leavers
- emotional and aspirational support
- inclusion of the hidden voices of more 'hard to reach' young people
- empowerment to take decisions
- trusted two-way communication

[Appendix D](#) sets out a number of features to consider when setting up and running a Care Leavers Forum, including relate training for care leaver participants.

A forum is not the only way of engaging care leavers in decisions; they function best when supported by a variety of other ways of engagement that suit the way in which they feel involved and listened to. For example, it is rare for a care leaver to want to travel to a forum until they see the benefits from doing so, we suggest you make it less formal by incorporating it into social events such as cooking and sharing a meal, watching DVDs or anything else that might be relaxing and of value to the attendees. In addition, local authorities in the project found that using social media is another effective way to engage and maintain contact with care leavers. Please see the *New Belongings Guide: Engaging Care Leavers through Social Media* at [Appendix G](#).

It is also important to have a recognised and accepted way in which decisions made about services are influenced by care leavers. So direct links to the corporate parenting board – which can be done in a number of ways – are essential. The engagement of care leavers in a forum is a long-term commitment that will need management resources to ensure it is maintained.

2.4 Review of the Role and Experience of Personal Advisors

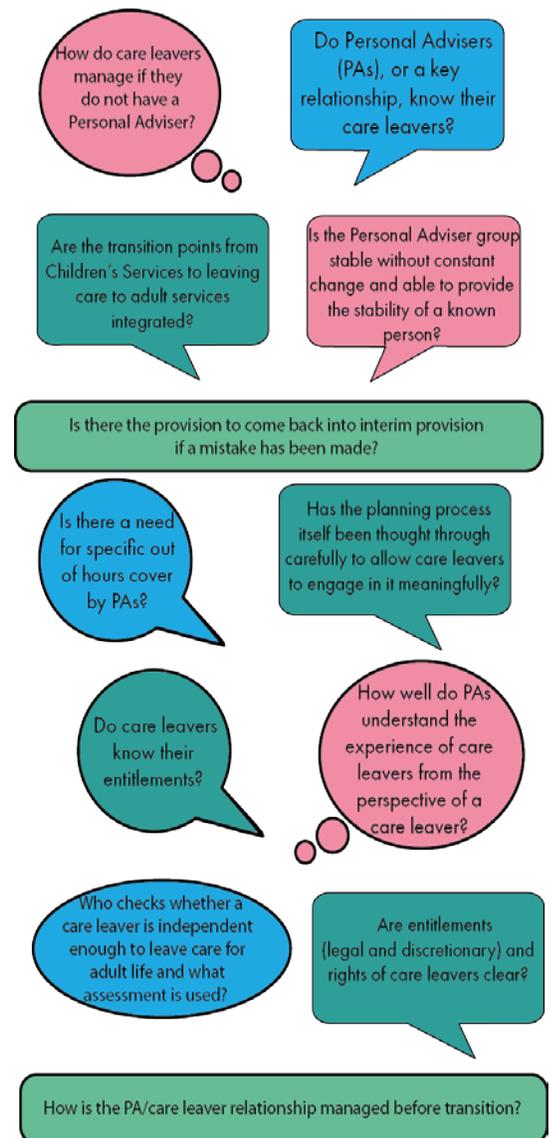
A relationship of trust with a Personal Adviser is critical to a care leaver's experience and stability. Personal Advisers provide direct advice and access to information and can make links to other services and agencies. The ability and willingness of a care leaver to access and use that advice and support can make a significant difference to their transition to adult life.

Authorities need to review the Personal Adviser support to care leavers and consider the following points and questions in figure 2.

- Availability and quality of the Personal Adviser service, including caseloads
- Information about the entitlements of care leavers. Care leavers may not know about their rights and entitlements
- The quality of the Pathway Plans and the planning process itself are important since they encapsulate the actions being taken by the care leaving service and the care leaver
- Role of care leavers – their participation in the recruitment and training of Personal Advisers can be used to raise the level of understanding of the experience of care leavers. Examples of care leaver participation in such training during the New Belongings project are listed in [Appendix E](#)

Understanding of the quality of the information provided to them and the quality and relevance of the Pathway Planning process will improve the quality of support to care leavers.

Figure 2 - Questions to ask in Review of PA Role



2.5 Role of the Senior Leadership

The local authority is the corporate parent for care leavers; therefore, the commitment of the senior executive leadership and other council employees is very important for improving services to care leavers. This applies across all departments of the council and its partners who can provide opportunities and support to care leavers.

The Chief Executive Officer (CEO) has a particular role because it is only at that level services can be joined up across the council itself to use the full power of the resources and services of the authority; for example, with the Housing Department or Economic Development Team. The CEO also has a unique role in relation to partner agencies since, as the executive head of the council, they can make contact with, and representations to, partner agencies such as major employers in the area, the local NHS commissioning group, DWP and other public services that touch the lives of care leavers. Similarly, CEOs of authorities that are coterminous can work together to join up services to care leavers across boundaries.

The experience of the New Belongings project was that the commitment of the senior leadership, and particularly the CEO, could be a significant factor in improving and joining up services.

Tom Riordan CEO, Leeds



Tom Riordan, Chief Executive of Leeds City Council speaking at a New Belongings Dissemination Event in 2015, said "Leading Change in Care Services" led to care leavers being supported by harnessing all of the city's resources rather than relying solely on the council.

Leeds is a 'child friendly city' and every council meeting loops back to the question: what is it like growing up as a child or a care leaver in Leeds?

City-wide services and those in the community and private sector are then joined-up to make the provisions that would ensure the best possible outcome for all children in Leeds, including care leavers.

A CEO can contribute in a variety of ways by:

- **Emphasizing** the role and holding to account all directors and departments in the council in delivering the responsibility of the corporate parent, for example by providing work placements and apprenticeships
- **Challenging** any apparent reluctance in council services either to pay for the legal entitlements of care leavers or to respond to the needs of care leavers
- **Finding** out whether there are protocols to deliver seamless services for care leavers within the council and with partners
- **Understanding** the experience and point of view of care leavers through personal contact and asking how effective the council is at staying in touch after young people have left care

2.6 Role of the Leader of the Local Authority

The Leader and councillors in an authority are also corporate parents who play a key role on the corporate parenting board and in decisions about services to care leavers. They can also use their influence in the wider community to increase the willingness of local people, businesses and community groups to support care leavers in the area.



<http://newbelongings.org.uk/project-updates/bristol-city-leaders-make-new-pledge-support-care-leavers>

The Leader and councillors can contribute in many ways.

- **Participate** in the launch of the New Belongings project. This can be used to send a signal to people in the council and in the wider community that helping care leavers to make a good transition to adult life benefits the whole community and is rewarding in itself. Businesses, community groups and local agencies can be encouraged to offer practical help to achieve some of the priorities for care leavers such as apprenticeships and volunteering.
- **Help to secure** effective support in the longer term through local employers, the Chamber of Commerce, church and faith groups, Rotary and Lions Clubs, scouts/guides, arts and sports organisations and other local groups.
- **Build their understanding** of the experience and needs of their care leavers as part of their role on the corporate parenting board and by personal discussions with their care leavers. They can then take that understanding and commitment to corporate parenting to influence others in the council and the wider community because they will be able to identify opportunities for those young people.



3. DELIVERING NEW BELONGINGS TO YOUR CARE LEAVERS



3.1 Role of a “Critical Friend”

A ‘critical friend’ is an important part of the team you form to implement the New Belongings approach and methodology. In the New Belongings project, we used a national team of people who were assigned to work with the local authorities participating in the project. The team included a panel of care leavers and a group of facilitators with experience of the Children’s Service and high-level experience of policy and delivery in employment, education and criminal justice and of major projects. One of the facilitators and between two and four care leavers worked with each cluster of local authorities on a paid basis for up to one day per month.

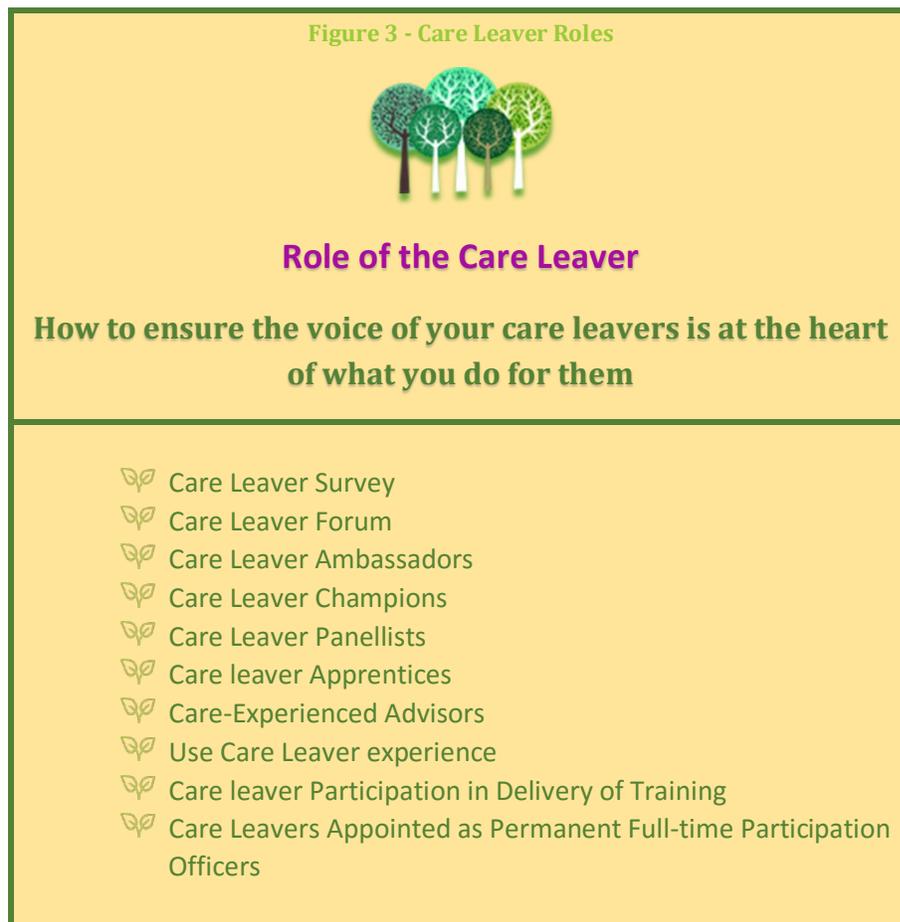
The New Belongings team was a “critical friend” to the local authority clusters, explaining the methodology and approach of the project and giving advice as needed. Panel members also provided some training to care leavers, Care Leaver Forum members, and Personal Advisers in some authorities.

We suggest local authorities using the New Belongings approach and methodology develop a ‘critical friend’ role by bringing in expertise from outside their own local authority area. A critical friend working by phone, email or direct contact is helpful and could provide effective, targeted input. If you choose to use a care leaver for this role, we recommend that they should be paid for their work and it may be helpful to select an experienced care leaver from a neighbouring authority.



3.2 Involving Your Care Leavers

Care leavers are at the heart of New Belongings and they also played a crucial role in the project as members of the project team, panellists and as members of the Care Leaver Forums in individual authorities. There are a number of other ways to ensure care leavers are involved in the development of your services to them as listed in figure 3 below.



3.3 Working in a Local Authority Cluster

Authorities in the New Belongings project between 2015 and 2016 worked in clusters of between two and six local authorities and met together either quarterly or more frequently. The authorities exchanged plans and experience of what they were doing in their individual projects. They learnt from each other's practice and worked together on the common delivery of some services and arrangements for care leavers.

Authorities can decide to work in a cluster with other authorities with contiguous boundaries and/or with authorities with similar characteristics and demographics. This approach can give real benefits in the adoption of practice from elsewhere and in tackling difficult boundary issues so that services to care leavers join up across a wider area.

Virtual Cluster

Local authorities that are not geographically close but have similar sets of demographics or other areas of commonality worked together using remote management techniques to share best practice by combining the availability of help and expertise without the direct presence of facilitators. Such virtual clusters share good practice via phone and online rather than in person.

4. ASSESSING IMPROVEMENTS: PROGRESSING TOWARDS A GOLD STANDARD

The New Belongings approach should be viewed as an ongoing process leading to changes that would become embedded in the culture of the care leaving services. The thinking and work needed for the six elements of the methodology is significant and will take time. It could take between four and six months in year one to have an agreed plan that reflects the experience of local care leavers, sets the priorities for improvement and engages the support needed to achieve the improvement in services. The plan would ideally cover a period of at least one year, and probably longer, with review sessions with care leavers and feedback from them. The process of working through the methodology should lead to more engagement with your care leavers, which provides a foundation from which you can strive to build a better care leaving service, one that is responsive to their needs.



"Over the 3 years of our involvement in New Belongings, Trafford have made significant strides to putting our care leavers at the heart of what we do, not just in Children's Services, but in the wider Local Authority and our community. The test of success in all we do has to be the outcomes for care leavers. If we get care leavers right all other aspects of our interventions from early help, safeguarding and to children in care have to be on the right path. Being judged by Ofsted as an 'outstanding' authority with care leavers is a good outcome in any inspection. It is not just about what happens during the 4 weeks of the Inspection - it's about years of consistent hard graft and the constant drive for excellent standards that we work to all the time as Corporate Parents. We are delighted to be involved in the event on 8 July to share our learning with others. Look forward to seeing you all there." **Mark Riddell, Operations Manager, Permanence and Transition Team, Trafford speaking about the New Belongings Dissemination Event, City Hall London.**

Care leavers on the New Belongings national panel worked with their facilitators to rate each of the local authorities in the project on two issues:

1. How well the authority engages with, and listens to, the care leavers in its area.



2. How well the authority takes decisions that take into account the experience and understanding of the care leavers in its area.

Authorities were rated on a scale of 0 to 10, where 0 is no evidence that this is happening and 10 is compelling evidence. A range of available information was considered including the ability of an authority to survey a wide range of its care leavers, the effectiveness of arrangements to consult care leavers through a specific forum or other means and the extent to which such arrangements are linked to its corporate parenting board and decision-making on services to care leavers. Any evidence could be considered that showed the willingness of the authority to listen care leavers and to take some action in response to their views – such as the direct engagement of the CEO with care leavers.

Assessments were made after the authority had produced its plan (since that would give a basis for the initial assessment) and at the end of the project. Such an assessment is based inevitably on judgement, but it does give an idea of the scale and direction of change in the degree of engagement of care leavers by an authority. The “critical friend” is also able to take an independent view of how well care leavers are engaged.

4.1 Self-Assessment Framework

The independent team responsible for the evaluation of the New Belongings project, Dr Claire Baker and Jo Dixon, have developed a self-assessment framework for local authorities to use.

The Baker and Dixon Framework is based on the '*gold standard*' from the New Belongings project that is set out in section 1.2 of this guide. The framework is based on 10 areas, which reflect young people's pathways to adulthood:

1. Services responsive to views of care leavers
2. Being informed and supported
3. Educated (to their potential)
4. Helped into work (employability)
5. Having good health and well-being
6. Being in safe and settled accommodation
7. Having an adequate level of income
8. Having people to count on for emotional support
9. Being able to manage day-to-day life
10. Services that are being used by more vulnerable care leavers

Each area comprises a number of indicators that would be expected of a '*gold standard*' leaving care service. The framework draws on existing evidence and recognised frameworks for supporting care leavers, including Planning and Transitions guidance and the OFSTED inspection framework. Local authorities can use the framework in [Appendix F](#) to appraise their current performance and to identify key priorities and actions.

5. CONCLUSION

Care leavers often describe isolation as one of the most pervasive problems that affects their lives once they have left care. Even more than when looked after, they become acutely aware that they are 'nobody's children'. The notion that care leavers 'belong' to all of us is challenging; for their healthy emotional development, to achieve their potential, to lead fulfilled lives and contribute to society, care leavers need to be acknowledged as everybody's children.



"The New Belongings team is a family of care leaver advocates and care leavers, who are professionals in their own fields, who regularly display genuine care and respect for their colleagues and enable balanced and informed discussion through a rich mix of skills and perspectives. We have made considerable progress so far though we would do well to research further into our findings, seek further recruitment and continue to inspire cultural change on a wider scale. As a care leaver I have never before had faith in a group of people to organically bring about change in the care system as these guys can, by listening and responding to the true experts; LAC and care leavers. It's simple, but we must inspire more to do the same."

CJ, Care Leaver Panel Member New Belongings 2013/14

We all know what the problems are. We all know that legislative measures and an increased focus on leaving care over the last decade has brought disappointingly slow and limited change. New Belongings aims to move away from a sense of blame, guilt and failure, often endemic in provider services as well as care leaver populations, and explore what happens when we turn our focus outwards. It examines, in collaborative style, not only the experiences of care leavers and the successes and shortfalls of the services they use, but the potential of reaching out to the communities where they belong to better understand, support and embrace this dislocated population.



Appendices – (Part I)

Appendix	A	New Belongings Project Care Leaver Survey
Appendix	B	Feedback from Local Authorities on Conducting Care Leaver Surveys
Appendix	C	Two Examples of New Belongings Local Authority Plans
Appendix	D	Creating and Improving a Care Leaver Forum
Appendix	E	Care Leaver Participation in Personal Adviser (PA) Training
Appendix	F	The Baker and Dixon Leaving Care Services Self-Assessment Framework
Appendix	G	New Belongings Guide: Engaging Care Leavers through Social Media

Appendix A - New Belongings Care Leaver Survey

New Belongings Programme 2015/16 - Care Leaver Survey

Your local authority is taking part in the **New Belongings** programme which aims to improve things for young people leaving care. As part of the project we would be really grateful if you could answer some questions about your experiences and tell us your ideas about how to make things better for young people in care and care leavers.

We are not asking for your name so your answers will be anonymous

About you

Q1 Date of birth:

Q2 What stage are you in terms of leaving care? *(Please circle one answer which most closely describes your current circumstances)*

I am under 18 and I am in care (e.g. live in foster or children's home)	1
I am under 18 and I have left care	2
I am over 18 and live with my foster carer (staying put)	3
I am over 18 and live in supported accommodation e.g. hostel	4
I am over 18 and live independently	5
Other – Please describe your stage of leaving care:	6

Q3 Are you *(please tick)*

Male

Female



Q4 What are the best 3 things about leaving care?

(Don't worry if you can't think of 3 or if you have more things you want to say)

1.
2.
3.

Q5 What are the worst 3 things about leaving care?

1.
2.
3.

Q6 Can you tell us 3 ways in which you could have been better prepared for independence?

1.
2.
3.

Q7 What advice you would give to another care leaver?

Q11 Would you like to take part in a care leaver forum (group?) Please tick

Yes

No

Not sure

Q12 Finally, is there anything else you would like to say or top tips you have on improving things for care leavers.

Thank you for taking the time to give us your views – it will help us find out what is working and what needs to change.

Please return this questionnaire to:

Appendix B - Feedback from Local Authorities on Conducting Care Leaver Surveys

Feedback from pilot local authority surveys in New Belongings 2013/14

We asked the nine local authorities in the project to undertake a survey of the care leavers in their area to help identify what might be done to improve services for care leavers. Five of these authorities later provided some feedback on their experience of implementing the survey methodology. We have extrapolated issues and examples of good practice that we think would be useful. All five authorities said they would repeat the survey, typically on an annual basis.

Who to survey

The definitions of those who were surveyed look fairly consistent – care leavers from the age of 16 to 25. This covers those defined by the legislation as 'formerly relevant', 'relevant' and 'eligible' care leavers. Some authorities tried to survey all those covered by that definition and others used samples – in one case randomly selected from their database.

Making contact

The methods used to contact the care leavers varied greatly; two of the authorities were carrying out the surveys to tight timescales, which had an impact on the approach they used. One authority sent the survey as a questionnaire with a pre-paid envelope to all the care leavers on its database – and then followed up by completing some surveys face to face with PAs. Most contacted the care leavers by phone to ask whether they would take part. At least one supplemented this approach by asking their partner charity to organize a discussion with care leavers in an informal setting.

This process did reveal to some authorities that the contact details of their care leavers – particularly phone numbers – were out of date. The process of doing the survey gave some idea of the accuracy of the information held by the local authority.

How to interview

A number of approaches were taken to who did the interviews and how they were done. Three authorities used telephone interviews – in one case done by a Personal Adviser, in another case done by an employee of the council who was a care leaver and in a third case by care leavers who had been trained and were supported by staff members. One authority used a mixture of telephone interviews done by a trained member of staff together with face-to-face interviews

through trained staff employed by a charity. One authority had sent out questionnaires by post and then used the regular contacts that PAs had with care leavers to complete the surveys face-to-face.

The use of care leavers in the interviewing process was more difficult to organize and required as much staff time as it would have taken to do the interviews; there were no significant benefits to the care leavers doing the interviewing.

Survey questions

The authorities used the questions suggested by the New Belongings project 2013/14 (although for 2015 there have been two changes, including one addition as set out in **Appendix A**). One authority also gave some options to choose from for some of the questions.

Response rates

The response rates were 6%, 7%, 7%, 10% and 26%. The degree of variation is probably explained by a variety of factors: two authorities chose to survey a small sample; two authorities were completing their surveys in a very short timescale so that the results would be available for the launch of their project locally; and the authority with the highest response rate had the smallest number of care leavers.

Lessons for future surveys

The basis for the survey is the accuracy of the information about the contact details of care leavers held by the local authority. This is not easy to keep up to date and needs to be built into the way in which the local authority relates to its care leavers. The frequency and nature of direct contacts with care leavers makes a significant difference to the ability to get responses to such a survey.

A combination of keeping in regular contact with care leavers and making sure that their contact details are updated often will increase the response rate.

Carrying out the survey over a longer period of time is likely to increase the response rate because it will provide more opportunities for contact including using the regular reviews with PAs and any events with groups of care leavers. A longer timescale – for example, between two and four months - would also give the care leavers more notice of the issues and questions.

It is probably worth sending out the survey in advance by post and then using a wide variety of ways in which to follow up. Getting the survey by post has the advantage of giving some time and thinking space for respondents; it is possible that some questions got limited answers in the surveys because they were hard to answer them under the immediate time pressure of a telephone interview. It was apparent that doing the survey as part of a regular review by a PA

worked well. Also using groups or more informal events to cover the issues in the survey can get better and more informed responses. A couple of authorities thought that using technology more, through text surveys or apps, would help to improve responses; this would need to be in addition to other approaches so that those without such access were not disadvantaged.

One or two authorities thought that the questions used were too open ended as the answers to some questions were fairly limited. It may be that giving some prompts as one survey did would help; the survey also gave space to write in more details. It might also help to ask for practical examples of the issues identified. Authorities might want to add one or two specific questions about their services.

One issue to consider is whether there are particular minority groups who should be targeted in terms of getting representative answers for those groups, such as young people with disabilities or asylum seekers, care leavers in the youth justice system and those with communications impairment who may need an interpreter. There are likely to be specific issues that affect them, which will not be picked up unless there is a special effort to get replies from them.

Five of the authorities that ran the surveys have said that they would survey their care leavers again – typically on an annual basis. It is possible that care leavers will participate more in such surveys if they are seen as a regular part of how an authority works and that the results influence the services provided. Adding sufficient space for any comments that care leavers want to make may also improve the quality of the response.

Appendix C – Two Examples of New Belongings Local Authority Plans

This appendix provides two examples from the New Belongings project between 2013 and 2014 that illustrate approaches to setting out a plan local authorities might adopt.

Example 1 - Local Authority New Belongings Plan

One of the local authorities produced a project brief for its New Belongings implementation plan that:

- started with a definition of the project. That definition set out the background to the national New Belongings project and some key facts about care leavers in the area;
- made a self-assessment against the Care Leavers' Charter identifying what the authority did well and what it could do better against the Charter framework;
- set out what the authority wanted to achieve from the project. This included a number of outcomes which the authority wanted to improve and the conclusions from the survey of care leavers;
- identified (taking into account the survey of local care leavers, the self-assessment against the Care Leavers' Charter and the policy context of New Belongings) an action plan with six areas for development. Those six areas were accommodation, post 16 further education/employment/apprenticeships, community involvement and Lifelong Champions/mentoring, more transparent care leavers' entitlements, involving care leavers in shaping services and specialist services and support;
- described the governance for the project briefly;
- set out an action plan that, for each of the six areas for development/objectives described the three or four things that needed to be changed to achieve each objective, then listing the detailed actions to change those things, who was in the lead and by when the action would be completed. Each detailed action was then monitored over the project and rated (red, amber or green) in terms of the progress made.

Example 2 - Local Authority New Belongings Plan

Another local authority described what the project was aiming to achieve, its priorities and how the project would work in one document. It then used an action plan, that was using a template in their business planning process, to set out the detailed actions to deliver each key objective and then to track delivery during the project. The template specified that "actions

should be clear, understandable, linked to the delivery of an objective, time-bound and assigned to a responsible officer”. For example:

- under the broad overall objective of “improve employability of care leavers by widening, encouraging and supporting young people to EET opportunities with career plans”;
- two specific areas for action were set – 1. Increase the number of care leavers supported into EET through focused actions and support to reduce NEET care leavers and 2. Increase the number of care leavers accessing Further Education and Higher Education and strengthen support services;
- under each of those two specific areas for action, five or six actions to deliver were identified. To give two examples under the first action area – to contract with an external provider for intensive support to care leavers to access and sustain EET and to develop an opportunity with a provider to offer five construction jobs for care leavers;
- against each action the person responsible and the start and finish dates were identified. Progress was then tracked by the project manager.

Appendix D - Creating and Improving a Care Leaver Forum

1. Guide to Creating and Improving a Care Leaver Forum



2. Care Leaver Forum Training Video by MT and CJ

Click the image or link to watch or download the video: <https://vimeo.com/136613135>



Transcript of CLF Training Video



Adobe Acrobat Document

3. Facilitator Guide to Training to be on a Care Leaver



Forum



Appendix E - Care Leaver Participation in Personal Adviser (PA) Training

New Belongings Care Leaver PA Training Video by SL

To watch the video, click on the image below or this link: <https://vimeo.com/168461006>



Notes for Care Leaver PA Training Video
(Click on the icon to open file)



Adobe Acrobat
Document

Appendix F - Baker and Dixon Leaving Care Services Self-Assessment Framework

This Leaving Care Self-Assessment Framework tool was created by Dr. Claire Baker and Jo Dixon as part of their work leading the independent evaluation of the New Belongings Project. They have made this framework available to be used by local authorities who want to conduct an honest appraisal of their current performance in 10 key areas that are based on the New Belongings “gold standard” areas.

[Click on the image to read or download the full document.](#)

The Baker & Dixon Leaving Care Services Self-Assessment Framework

What is the framework?

- The Leaving Care Services Self-Assessment Framework tool was created by Dr. Claire Baker and Jo Dixon. The tool was developed and tested as part of their work leading the independent evaluation of the New Belongings programme. It is based on the New Belongings 10 ‘gold standard’ areas,¹ which reflect young people’s pathways to adulthood (Stein, 2012²).
- In each of the 10 areas, there are a number of statements relating to what might be expected of a ‘gold standard’ service to care leavers.
- The tool offers local authorities the opportunity to assess their current performance in the 10 areas and to ask: ‘What are my local authority’s current strengths and what are the areas that need development?’
- This is a new tool created by Baker & Dixon. It draws upon existing evidence and recognised frameworks for supporting care leavers (e.g. Care Planning and Transitions guidance; Ofsted framework; audit tools and a range of research and practice evidence).³

How can this framework help your service?

- Local authorities are free to use this tool to honestly appraise their current performance in 10 key areas, providing supporting evidence where appropriate and available.
- The tool will help your local authority to identify key priorities and actions.
- Completing this self-assessment framework will be a useful exercise to conduct in preparation for Ofsted inspection or supporting your post Ofsted action plans.

¹ Services responsive to views of care leavers (as individuals and a group); Being informed and supported; Educated (to their potential); Helped into work (employability); Having good health and wellbeing; Being in safe and settled accommodation; Having an adequate level of income; Having people to count on for emotional support; Being able to manage day to day life; Services that are used by more vulnerable care leavers such as disabled care leavers, young people who have been homeless, in the youth justice system, living out of area, UASC.

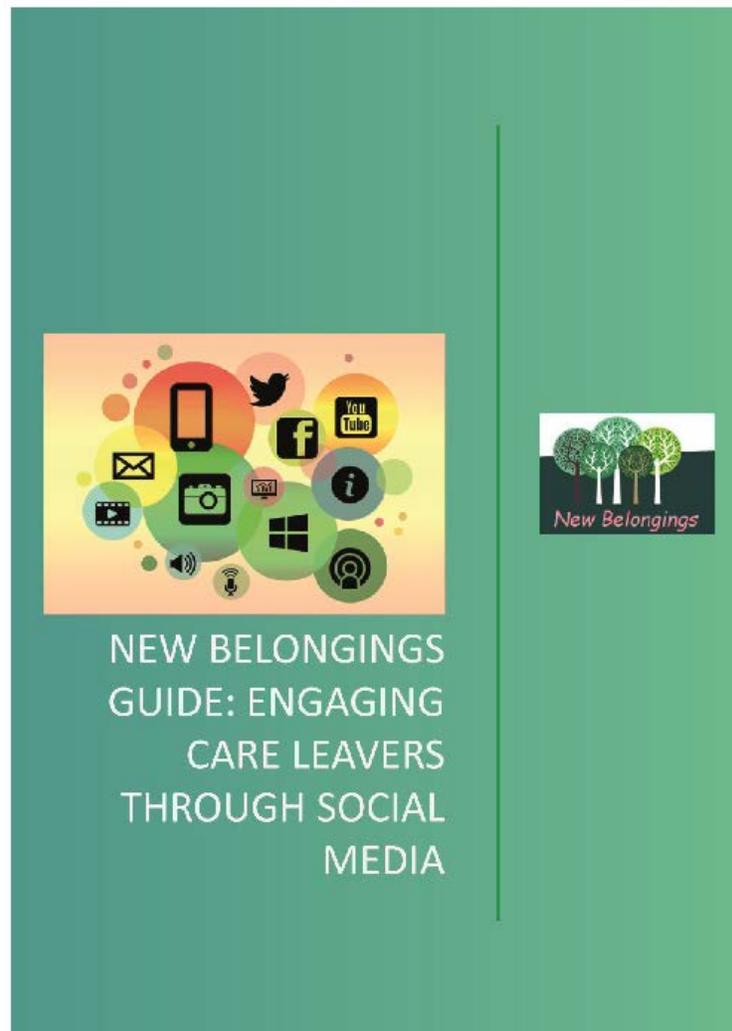
² Stein, M. (2012) Young People Leaving Care: Supporting pathways to adulthood, Jessica Kingsley, London.

³ Selected list of key resources used to inform the development of the leaving care self-assessment framework: Barnardos questions for Corporate parents; Barnardos Beyond Care; LGA questions to ask for scrutinising services; analysis of over 20 Ofsted reports; Barnardos Costs of not Caring; New Belongings year 1 documents; Centre for Social Justice – Finding their feet; Office for Children Commissioner – 10 points for CQC to monitor; LILAC work; North West minimum standards; DFE residential care quality standards; NICE LAC health work; NCB – putting corporate parenting into practice; DFE Care leaver data pack; IRISS – redesigning support for Care leavers; Access All Areas; Care leaver Charter; Care Inquiry etc.



Appendix G – New Belongings Guide: Engaging Care Leavers through Social Media

[Click on the image to read or download the full document.](#)





A Guide to the New Belongings Approach: A way Forward for Care Leavers

PART II - EXAMPLES OF CHANGING PRACTICE

Part II -EXAMPLES OF CHANGING PRACTICE

Authorities running projects were able to find out about practice in other areas through their meetings as clusters of authorities and through the dissemination events that were held during the New Belongings project. Face-to-face discussions and exchange of views is probably the best catalyst for learning from a trusted source but it can also help to find out information about practices used by authorities in a structured written form.

We thought that it would be useful to provide examples of changes in practice developed by authorities in their projects so that other care leaver services could compare to practices used elsewhere. We identified from the dissemination events a number of changes in practice by authorities that addressed key issues for care leavers in their projects and we provided a set template to use in setting out the information to capture key points.

Part 2 of the guide sets out the examples that have been written up using the template. It is a sample of the work done by authorities during the project. We have used the term “changing practice” to describe the range of interesting approaches that authorities have put into practice. The examples are grouped under the headings in the [self-assessment framework](#) described in section 4.1 of this guide.



Table of Examples of Changing Practice in New Belongings Local Authorities

Services Responsive to The Views of Care Leavers

1. [Engaging The Care Leaver Community in Southwark + Young Person's Guide to Leaving Care](#)
2. [Enhancing Community and Corporate Parenting Through a Pledge Made to Care Leavers in Bristol](#)
3. [Improving Personal Adviser Services in Bournemouth](#)
4. [Listening to the Care Leaver's Voice \(Care Leavers Ambassadors in Devon\)](#)

Being Informed and Supported

5. [Use of Outcome Star in Wolverhampton and Sandwell](#)

Educated (to their potential)

6. [Reviewing the Education into employment Section of the Pathway Plan for Care Leavers](#)

Helped into Work (Employability)

7. [The National Benefits System for Care Leavers and Trafford-Job Centre Protocol](#)
8. [Apprenticeships in Calderdale](#)
9. [Employment and Preparation for Employment in Durham](#)

Having Good Health and Well Being

10. [Mental Health in Staffordshire](#)
11. [CAMHS Service for 16-25 year olds Care Leavers in Stockport](#)

Being in Safe and Settled Accommodation

12. [Approach to Homelessness and Housing in Durham](#)
13. [Accommodation Support in Devon](#)

Having an Adequate Level of Income

14. [Incentivizing Care Leavers: Dealing with Council Tax in North Somerset](#)
15. [Assistance to Care Leavers – Emergency and Leaving Care Grants in Trafford](#)

Having People to Count on for Emotional Support

16. [Mentoring and the Extended Description of Pure Insight Mentoring Scheme in Stockport](#)
17. [Safe Space/Hub for Care Leavers in North Somerset](#)
18. [Personal Advisers: A Duty to age 25 in Trafford](#)

Being Able to Manage Day to Day Life

19. [Preparation for Leaving Care in Staffordshire](#)

Services Used by More Vulnerable Care Leavers

20. [Advice to Personal Advisers Working with Care Leavers Who Have Been Asylum Seeking children](#)
21. [Teenaged Pregnancy Support in Durham](#)



Services Responsive to The Views of Care Leavers

1. Engaging the Care Leaver Community in Southwark

Name of New Belongings Local Authority: Southwark

Subject tackled: Engaging the Care Leaver Community

Rationale:

Southwark aim to have an outstanding empathetic yet empowering approach towards their care-leavers and the issues they face. They have acknowledged the real core issues of loneliness and isolation that have been highlighted on a national level and through surveying. As a result, mental health and emotional wellbeing are given high priority when engaging with their care leavers.

What did the LA do?

To tackle this, Southwark have implemented the following actions.

- Seasonal projects at Talfourd place. A successful garden project was run over the summer period where young people were invited to help create and enjoy a sensory garden. They learnt how to do gardening, grow vegetables; about some of the benefits and healing properties within nature; and how important it is to be healthy in mind and body. This participation was a chance for Southwark's young people to create a kinship amongst each other and with the staff. It allowed a far more relaxed opportunity for staff to show a less detached approach when talking about emotions and coping mechanisms. The modules they use with their projects have care leavers at the heart and they are very much involved in how the projects run. It is the balance between detached youth work and social pedagogy that make them so successful.
- A partnership with 'Young Minds' means they often carry out workshops with them. Their current work shop is called 'How to manage when getting vexed'. This project has been set up to support care-leavers increase their knowledge and adoption of coping strategies and managing their emotions. Even the terminology when advertising these workshops has been successful in getting harder-to-reach care-leavers to attend.
- *Speaker Box* is a forum who meet regularly to discuss the service and improvements. This group is very active in steering social change and have had the opportunity to meet the CEO of Southwark council, and the Corporate Parenting Committee to air their grievances and put forward suggestions for a better service. This forum is split into three groups for: children in care of primary school age; those of secondary school age; and their care-leavers aged 16+.

They meet regularly and all three groups come together once a year. Twice yearly, they have the opportunity to present their suggestions to a Corporate Parenting Committee.

- *Speaker Box* have their own magazine and the young people are fully involved in the development and editorial process. They have three chairs for their group, some of whom have been selected for how well they can articulate and others have been selected so that they get the chance to improve how they articulate in a group setting. Southwark are very inclusive in their engagement and have found some of their most high risk young people have enriched the group and their understanding.
- Southwark's New Belongings Forum includes three chairs, one of whom is 16 and has been selected to represent the future wishes and needs of care leavers. Southwark will be bringing together members of their forum for a care leavers residential gathering later in the year where young people will be generating youth led videos on emotional health and other matters vital to them.
- This year the forum will be creating a form to monitor how their feedback is being used to influence good practice. Regular meetings with the new Deputy Director of Corporate Parenting will ensure this is evidenced so the young people can be assured their work within the forum is essential, beneficial and in no way tokenistic.
- Southwark care leavers have the opportunity to be employed as Young Inspectors. They are trained by Southwark to go out and inspect the properties Housing provides for 16+.
- Southwark have an out of hours' duty emergency number young people can call.

Challenges

- It has been hard sometimes for Southwark's staff to ask forum members to take time out for the project when they can see they may be affected by taking on too many commitments.
- Southwark have noticed many young people often want things to happen immediately and that, coupled with the reality that some things within the system have a very slow process i.e. funding and particularly the allocation of housing thus creating an understandable amount of frustration for the care-leaver which can be challenging for staff.
- Talfourd place is not always an ideal meeting location for some of the care leavers, so they have taken this on board and now meet more locally in Southwark or there is an option for mobile participation, which has been a success. For example, care-leavers are welcome to join the group via a group telephone call if they cannot be present.



Impact

Southwark's awards ceremony was a clear indication of how great the relationship is between the care leavers of the local authority as well as the community. The Mayor of Southwark, Cllr Dora Dixon-Fyle attended to congratulate the care leavers, and it was pleasing to see how well she knew the staff and the young people. Southwark acknowledge big and small triumphs for the young people and it was fair to say there was a lot of success in the room to applaud.

Sustainability

Speakerbox for the wider group is already well-established, and the addition of the Forum should help identify particular priorities for care leavers.

Top tips

- Create and use your forums effectively to empower young people as well as Southwark.
- Use the Forum to guide the young people's focus from problem to solution so they can create something significant to meet their needs as care leavers when services fail to do so, as in the case of the Tope project or how Southwark have done by creating kinships, hubs and regular meet ups to counteract loneliness.

Please find below the **Children's Rights** booklet given to those leaving care, signposting them to services and support.



Adobe Acrobat
Document

[Children's Rights Booklet](#)

Contact details for lead at LA

lucy.milich@southwark.gov.uk

2. Enhancing Community and Corporate Parenting: A Pledge to Care Leavers in Bristol

Name of New Belongings Local Authority: Bristol

Subject tackled: Enhancing Community and Corporate Parenting through a Pledge to Care Leavers in Bristol

Rationale

A number of surveys of care leavers, and feedback more generally, indicated to the Authority that there was considerable scope for improvement in the nature and timeliness of some of the services it provided across the full range of support activities. Moreover, it was considered by the Authority that it could do more to meet its obligations as a corporate parent, when judged against the levels of support which other parents and guardians might be expected to provide to their children in the wider community.

What did the LA do?

As part of its wider improvement plan, the Authority examined very carefully all of the feedback provided by its care leavers and formulated responses to the key themes on a “you said, we promise to do” basis. It also engaged at senior levels within the Authority to ensure that services became truly joined up across the care leaver community, and that everyone understood their joint and several responsibilities as corporate parents.

Once this process was completed, and a plan of action agreed, the Authority published “Our Plan: Bristol’s Corporate Parenting Strategy” which sets out its vision, the feedback from children in care, the Council’s values, the overall context, a dedicated set of objectives and a specific range of commitments. In his foreword to this plan, the Mayor of Bristol made clear that children in care and care leavers are “the responsibility of the city and we must make the best of opportunities available to them, caring for them as our own children.”

Alongside this plan, the Authority published another document entitled “Our Pledge: Bristol working together for children in care and care leavers.” This document describes a significant number of specific promises which the Council has formulated, in response to the feedback received, aimed at ensuring that its children in care, and care leavers, are valued and supported to achieve their full potential. The range of promises set out in the pledge cover physical and



emotional health, safeguarding, support and care, education, providing a voice and participative opportunities, and becoming independent.

Challenges

- The Authority started from a relatively low base, and therefore had to work hard to persuade care leavers that it was serious about changing their lives for the better and making a significant difference;
- In the process it had to ensure that members of the Authority, at all levels, fully understood their role as corporate parents and the alignment with their traditional focus on the delivery of operational priorities;
- The range of commitments to which the Authority has pledged is significant, and will require some resource re-deployment and cultural change (which Bristol has in hand) to deliver and sustain.

Impact

The pledge was launched in November 2015 and, although these are early days, there are already signs that it has helped engage the wider Authority in prioritising children in care and care leavers. For example, the pledge has:

- Helped inform the development of a new council-wide VCS grant awarding strategy which identifies children in care and care leavers as a priority;
- Been an important factor in developing a new HB pathway for care leavers with the Housing Benefit team and Local Prevention and Crisis Fund;
- Led to prioritised pathways to council jobs, including the introduction of guaranteed interviews.

Sustainability

The Authority has invested a considerable amount of energy and passion in this initiative, and re-engineered some its modus operandi to support delivery. Corporate Parenting is now seen as a critical Council responsibility, and the pledge commitments will form part of its wider business plans moving forward.

Top tips

- A pledge of this nature will only succeed if it has the unqualified support of senior Council leaders, at both an executive and political level. Obtaining such support is

therefore seen as an essential pre-requisite before embarking on a significant pledge based initiative.

- The pledge must accurately reflect the needs expressed in the feedback received by care leavers, and be expressed in an open and fully responsive manner, in order to ensure credibility and traction.

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3. Improving Personal Adviser Services in Bournemouth

Name of New Belongings Local Authority: Bournemouth

Subject tackled: Development of an improved Personal Adviser (PA) service

Rationale

Following an Ofsted review in 2014 and a full service review in 2015, Bournemouth decided to improve its PA and Pathway planning service to be more responsive to care leavers and meet their needs more effectively.

In the New Belongings survey 2015 care leavers asked for more aspirational support from their Personal Advisers to stem a slide towards a life on benefits. They needed more attention from Personal Advisers on a regular basis and at times that worked for them. They also asked for improvements in the Pathway Planning process.

What did the LA do?

The Council listened to survey responses from care leavers and set up new PA job descriptions for existing and newly recruited staff with a requirement to offer aspirational support. Expectations of the role of PAs have been clarified with a firm accent on supporting care leavers and helping them plan a future. Care leavers have taken part in the recruitment process.

The new PA team is now charged with getting to know each care leaver personally to give a more responsive service even though there is a shortage of social workers for the 16 plus age group. Poor practice will be monitored and highlighted.

A review of Pathway planning involving care leavers has ensured that each care leaver now has an individual plan. Their PA support will now offer opportunities and dedicated time every 4 weeks for one hour to discuss issues at a time to suit them after school and college. The timing of the service has been changed so that PAs can be contacted up to 7.30pm on weekdays for care leavers in need of their support.

A commitment has been made to improving Pathway planning documents and to beginning planning at an earlier stage.

Challenges

- Attitude changes towards the needs of care leavers had to be encouraged amongst the staff; long held perspectives had to be challenged



- Negotiations with staff and unions over new job descriptions for PAs to be more aspirational for care leavers were challenging but have now been concluded successfully.

Southern cluster

As the recruitment of new PAs has been central to both LAs in the cluster (Portsmouth City Council as well as Bournemouth Borough Council) New Belongings panellists devised a joint changing practice session for new PAs in both authorities. (A PDF of the training slides is attached below*). The purpose was to give insight into the experiences of care leavers working with PAs and to propose how that experience could improve. There were 4 stages:

Stage 1

Care leavers from both Local Authorities were grouped together to talk through their needs and experiences with New Belongings panellists. Local care leavers were encouraged to choose and create a range of interactive activities for the PAs, to demonstrate a range of their needs, wants and frustrations when working with their PAs. This cluster session was conducted in Portsmouth.

Stage 2

Panellists and Facilitator agreed the outline structure of the session with Local Authorities to apply that insight to improving the Pathway planning process and give Personal Advisers insight into the challenges care leavers face, their issues with PAs and how to resolve them positively.

The content was designed to focus on:

- Understanding the life of young people in care, their vulnerability, journey and the impact on them of a myriad of professionals
- The role of an effective Personal Adviser - genuine engagement, patience, consistency, encouraging trust, respecting confidentiality
- Building trust in relationships developed through face to face contact, conversation and commitment
- How communication plays a vital role in developing successfully care leaver relationships with PAs; how to communicate in a way that is understandable for that individual young person
- Pathway planning, an incremental process, for each individual and not rushed to comply with deadlines
- Rights and entitlements - knowing them and clarifying confusion when they are not clear and interpretation varies



Stage 3

New Belongings panellists worked with local care leavers from both Local Authorities to devise the detail of a session in which all were involved and prepare them to take part in it (completed in Portsmouth). They wanted to make sure that local care leavers were comfortable with the content and that their views on exercises and challenges they face in their relationship with PAs, gained in previous sessions, were reflected in the content. Supported by panellists at all times, care leavers chose which sections they wanted to lead on, present and deliver.

Panellists devised a presentation and exercises (with local care leavers) and delivered a session for PAs in both authorities, this time in Bournemouth. The format was interactive, to convey the perspective of care leavers and gain insight into their experiences. There was an evaluation of the session by participants with generally very positive feedback

Impact on the PA service

Bournemouth has supported a culture change in the Borough's attitude to care leavers, at their behest, to help them stay clear of benefits and build a future. A 'massive' change has taken place in a range of actions and performance measures to be more responsive to care leavers.

Sustainability

Bournemouth has demonstrated commitment to carrying through improvements for care leavers according to their New Belongings action plan through staff changes. Councillors and Officers are committed to continuing and developing further service improvement beyond the New Belongings project period.

Top tips for improving the service

- Come with a positive and open to change attitude learning from each other not placing blame. Constructive criticism is key!
- Ensure young people are involved in the content, design and delivery of the training; this creates a greater impact on the individuals.
- Make sure there are clear aims about what needs to be achieved from services delivered by PAs
- Incorporate both the young person's view but also provide PAs with the



opportunity for their concerns to be discussed.

Any comments by care leaver editor

- Challenge the view not the person
- Respect care leavers- do not belittle what is being said; treat them like you would treat the CEO or Ofsted
- Appreciate the time and effort that has gone into the presentation to support staff work with young people more effectively; reward their effort

*Attachment: Click on the PDF to read the New Belongings Practice Improvement Session for Personal Advisors (PAs) Training Slides



Adobe Acrobat
Document

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4. Listening to the voice of Care Leavers in Devon

New Belongings Local Authority: Devon County Council

Subject Tackled: Listening to the voice of Care Leavers (Care Leaver Ambassadors)

Rationale

In the spring of 2015 Devon's Children's services was inspected by Ofsted and was rated inadequate with regard to 'the experience and progress of care leavers'; despite an overall rating of requires improvement. As an authority, progress had been made with regard to involving children and young people but as a service, there was a desire to truly embed their voices and expertise at the heart of leading improvements for young people leaving care.

The Senior Management Team tasked the Participation Team, in liaison with the Social Work Academy (Workforce Learning & Development), to develop a model that would fulfil a series of aims;

- Meaningful and sustainable with inbuilt flexibility.
- Transferable to other service areas, partner agencies and corporate partners.
- Positive outcomes and career opportunities for the individual care leavers recruited.

What did the LA do?

Design

The vision was that care experienced young people between the ages of 16 and 21 should be given the chance to develop their employability and lead improvements from a customer perspective within Children's Services.

Initial discussions with young people and colleagues responsible for managing the Corporate Apprenticeship scheme led to the design of a two tier programme that would enable a level of inclusivity, flexibility and progression for those involved.

Tier One (entry level): Paid Work Experience programme within the Social Work Academy or Safeguarding Board.

Placement from three months to one year with hours by agreement.

The premise of this was to be able to develop a young person centred programme of work based on the ability and commitments of the successful candidate/s that would enable those in school and college to participate.

Core Tasks - Workforce training and development

Tier Two: Corporate Apprenticeship with the Participation Team

Placement for two years (ring fenced for care experienced applicants only), working 32-37 hours per week.

This programme offers inclusive training and study time to acquire a Higher Level Business Administration qualification.

Core Tasks - Informing policy, guidance, quality assurance, service design and delivery.

The practicalities of this meant that the project had to sit within existing recruitment time scales which did delay the implementation of the programme longer than was desirable.

Implementation

The first task was to promote an information event where young people could come along and find out more information about the roles. This was promoted through frontline teams and the care leaver forum.

Following this a round of competitive interviews were scheduled for the work experience scheme and the corporate recruitment process managed the apprenticeship.

Two work experience candidates were recruited in August 2015 and two apprentices in October 2015.

Review

We are now at a point of reviewing progress, strengths and weaknesses to date and assessing;

- The capacity within the Academy to recruit to two further roles
 3. Widening the apprenticeship to other service areas Next steps will be to achieve the following;
 4. Support the care leavers in post to develop a programme of Ambassador roles
 5. Training the care leavers in post to be the conduit for engagement in regulated inspection



Challenges

6. The programme requires ongoing innovation and sustained support to ensure individual participants thrive.
7. Desking arrangements/data protection need to be carefully considered
8. Ensuring participants are colleagues on equal terms and not accorded 'special' status; either positively or negatively
9. Young people attracted to the programme have been those with more complex levels of needs

Impact

The examples below are highlights.

10. ASYE Social Worker feedback was that they learnt more about what it means to be in care in one training session with six care leavers than they had in any other forum to date
11. Introduction of Guarantor Scheme for young people moving on to independence in the private rental market
12. Development of a Personal Occupation and Progression Plan (POPP) to replace the PEP for young people in year 11+
13. Successful modelling and development of further apprenticeship opportunities for care leavers with partner
14. Young People's involvement (at a range of levels) in all recruitment and selection of social care staff. One social work candidate commented as follows;

"The way in which the team explained to us that the young person's interviews were vital to the process and that the young people played a very important role. There was not even a sniff, no 'tokenism' throughout the whole day which has to be commended."

"The impact is much more wide ranging than this and has become an intrinsic part decision making and developments at all levels within the service, with the care experienced young people employed reminding corporate parents to 'think care leaver' in all the work that they do."

Sustainability

There has been a commitment to both programmes within the authority and an agreement that facilitating the work is part of the core business of the Participation Team.



Succession planning is inbuilt into both models, with a flexible rolling recruitment programme for the work experience scheme and a two-year cycle of recruitment for the apprenticeship.

A key strand to the supervision of participants is 'next steps' planning and wrapping training and opportunities around each young person to enable them to reach their personal goals and long-term career aspirations.

Top tips

- Ensure placements are made in a team that has been adequately prepared and skilled up to receive them and has time to support them
- Ensure there is sufficient training and support for the young people to be representative of the leaving care community and not just their own experiences.

Any comments by care leaver editors

"I think that the impact it has had for me really is just being able to show my potential to people that might want to employ me after this apprenticeship; it has also given me new opportunities to get ahead. I feel that the difference it has made to the service is that now they can't avoid us if we are doing massive pieces of work with children and young people in care and always want our input into something they are doing." Beth Wakefield

"This job has completely changed my life. That may sound a bit of a cliché but being given this opportunity means I have been able to get my foot in the door to progress in the career path I want to succeed in. The flexibility my job offers means I can be there for my son when needed and give him a better home life as I am able to enjoy the important times with him. My job has given me a reason to enjoy going to work and I know my input can really help make a change to other young people going through the system. I think the difference we have made to the service is that we have opened people's eyes to what young people can bring to the table." Sam Heaton

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Educated to their potential

5. Education into Employment in Pathway Plans - Devon

New Belongings Local Authority: Devon

Subject tackled: Reviewing the Education into employment Section of the Pathway Plan for Care Leavers

Rationale

To help Care Leavers plan a successful future and access any education, training or support they may need.

What did the LA do?

A Personal Occupation Progression Plan [POPP] was developed through working closely with Care Leavers, Social Care, Virtual College and training providers, with a focus on career/occupation planning as well as educational outcomes,

The Plan comprises three sections where the young person and those involved in supporting their educational development contribute. A workflow to timetable college applications gives Social Workers and Care Leavers plenty of notice in forward planning for courses.

When Questionnaires have been completed and the young person or education/training provider has identified a need or challenge, a POPP meeting will be arranged and an Action Plan completed. The Care Leaver has a key role in deciding where and when the meeting will take place and who will attend.

These POPP sections are:

1. **Care Leaver Questionnaire:** Completed every six months by the young person to report on their progress and raise any concerns. The young person identifies their goals/ambitions and how they are getting on in achieving these. They also list anything they are not happy with, what can be done to help, who supports them and any next steps.
2. **College Report and Questionnaire:** Completed by the education or training provider this offers a perspective on progress made by the care leaver, any challenges they are facing and what can be done to help them realise their goals.
3. **Action Plan:** Where a need has been shown, either by the young person or the education/training provider, this Plan will be completed at a special POPP meeting



and will list next steps, who is responsible for ensuring these are carried out, a specified completion date, and how this can be measured. The Questionnaires are attached to the Action Plan.

Challenges

The timing of completing the Care Leaver Questionnaire was crucial as it can impact on college applications and examinations.

Impact

There is already evidence of POPP's success in working closely with education/training providers and the virtual college, and has given young people the opportunity to help manage and realise their aspirations and potential.

Sustainability

POPP now forms an integral part of the support and planning process for young people in care and care leavers.

Top tips

Need to use this for every young person in care and follow through once they leave to ensure they receive correct support and training

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Being informed and Supported

6. Use of Outcome Star in Wolverhampton and Sandwell

New Belongings LA: Sandwell

Subject tackled: Preparation for Leaving Care and Pathway Planning – Young Persons Outcome Star Model

Rationale

Outcome Star had already been used within the authority in other services such as early help in troubled families and within schools and had had positive effects on outcomes for young people. The model or tool is used for people in the service to show progression with an outcome focus.

It has been used in looked after services following an Ofsted inspection that highlighted a lack of clarity in terms of outcomes in some pathway plans. The authority wanted to use the model so there would be clear action plans setting out what outcomes could be achieved, by whom and when.

Sandwell are using the approach for a limited group of care leavers with a focus on accommodation for care leavers who are in trainer flats preparing to live independently and take on their own tenancy. Young people have to demonstrate how they will take on their own flat and tenancy; they have to show how they can live on their own and budget whilst managing their education, apprenticeship or work life.

Outcome Star is used when care leavers move into a training flat initially and then updated every 6-8 weeks and then every three months. It is a visual tool so young people can see how they have progressed and reflect on what they did to make progress. It also rates young people's journey through the leaving care system.

What did the LA do?

- Researched the effectiveness of Outcome Star
- Brought a business case to senior managers for sign off (for costs, time involved and introducing something new into the service)
- Once signed off, organised trainers to come and deliver the session (Sandwell already had in-house trainers)
- Discussed it with staff to get their feedback and their feelings towards it



- Booked two separate half days for staff to attend (this was due to having high numbers of staff, so the group had to be split but it also ensured staff were available for young people)
- Piloted the tool with some young people

Challenges

- For young people it was just another piece of paper another assessment to do, so it was challenging to get young people to buy into and embed it into their thinking as something which could be very effective and useful for them.
- For Personal Advisers there was the challenge of using the model alongside other tools such as pathway planning, signs of safety and moving on, which were other assessments that had to be completed for care leavers moving onto independence.
- The capacity to really take time to embed it into the system with all staff so it was meaningful and effective when working with young people.
- System issues and errors caused the tool to not work as effectively as it could do.
- Conflicts with other priorities occurred, especially if a young person was having a crisis.

Impact

There is some evidence to show that young people in the trainer flats have benefitted from Outcome Star as they have successfully moved on to independence. The feedback from some young people was very positive. Some like the visual aspect so they can see where things are going well and where things were not going so well. It also helps them to see how they have progressed, where it may not otherwise have been so easily evident to them. Outcome Star allows them to see their achievements as well as their setbacks and to reflect. It is still in the early stages of implementation though the decision to use it was based on evidence of its effectiveness in other council services.

It is worth noting that Wolverhampton, which is also in the Black Country cluster, is in the early stages of implementing the use of Outcome Star for all care leavers. Wolverhampton has also used the model in other services and took the decision to use it for care leavers in December 2015; so it will be used for care leavers after March 2016.

Sustainability

The Outcome Star method is used more widely in Sandwell (and in Wolverhampton). This does give the advantage of reducing the costs of introduction because there is already training expertise within the authority. Sandwell will review the effectiveness of its use for care leavers in training flats before deciding whether to use it more extensively for care leavers. This is to ensure that young people are not overloaded with too much information and various forms to fill out but equally to ensure staff members have time to use the tool effectively without being bombarded with extra paperwork on already tight resources.

Top tips

- Don't bring out the Outcome Star when first meeting young people; discussion and tactful conversation should help to bring out the information that is needed to use the tool.
- Local authorities who may consider using Outcome Star should check whether it is in use elsewhere in their authorities as that would reduce the costs of implementing considerably.

Comments by care leaver editor

Outcome Star looks as if it could be very beneficial for local authorities to use for care leavers. It has a clear focus on outcomes and highlights progression, strength and weaknesses for both care leavers and the staff that work with them. It would work well to have one holistic document with the pathway plan and the star chart combined because not only does it provide a simplified visual tool, but it also does not burden young people with multiple documents that might overlap. I think it would be good for local authorities to be able look at trends in improvements to help in planning ahead for the leaving care service. Some young people find it quite positive to use visual tools and have been able to take on their tenancy and reflect back on where they were a few months ago.

Contact details for lead at LA

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Laura Wood – Wolverhampton

Note about Outcome Star and how it works

There are five stages young people can identify themselves at (e.g. known as the 'journey of change'):

- 1) Being in the stuck phase (Red) – don't want to accept help or don't know how to ask or get help
- 2) Accepting Help (Orange) – Professionals will be driving the change for them.
- 3) Trying to sort things out (Yellow)
- 4) Getting there with support (Green)
- 5) Independent (Blue) – if they encounter crises, they can access their own support network without having to rely on services; they are also more than capable of seeking help.

Understanding the 8 scales:

- Accommodation
- Health
- Working and Learning
- People and support
- How you feel
- Choices and Behaviour
- Money and Rent
- Practical life skills

The bigger, wider and more even the circle is, the closer they are at successfully transitioning into adulthood (independent living).

The Star is designed to be accessible and engaging on a one to one basis; the aim is to have a genuine interaction with the young person. It creates a more holistic approach; it requires a conversation about many aspects of life that can help to raise issues that may otherwise be missed.

As a minimum, there is one-day training and introduction to Star Outcome.

The Star Outcome helps local authorities to identify what they are doing well and what they are not doing so well.



Helped into Work (Employability)

7. The National Benefits System for Care Leavers and Trafford-Job Centre Protocol

New Belongings Local Authority: Trafford Council

Subject tackled: The national benefits system for care leavers.

Rationale

A number of issues emerged from consultation and direct experience with care leavers with the current national scheme of benefits – notably, direct hardship and sanctions being very harsh and punitive. It was acknowledged that the current national scheme would not change to suit care leavers so a decision was made to work within existing structures. Trafford wanted to have a specific offer for care leavers from the DWP/JCP to improve their experience of the benefit system.

What did the LA do?

A number of meetings with the DWP* Regional Managers led to the development of a local offer to care leavers. A Joint Working Protocol has been put in place that includes:

1. Greater communication across both services leaving care and DWP to reduce the need for sanctions and to discuss with leaving care service before sanctions happen.
2. Joint Training approach – visiting teams
3. Shadowing each team to increase knowledge of each respective tasks
4. Early advance claims and faster appeals processes if applicable

Challenges

- Changes in staffing at DWP and having to start relationship again
- Sometimes young people are still being sanctioned for months with no consultation

Impact

- The care leaving team has seen a difference and fewer sanctions have been imposed on care leavers

- There is a better relationship between the care leaving service and the local DWP office

Sustainability

The Protocol will remain in place and will be reviewed every six months in future

Top tips

- Establish face-to-face contact with DWP and Job Centre Plus regarding the enhanced offer to care leavers
- Talk through real experiences of young people once benefits have been sanctioned
- Ask the unthinkable and see how far you get
- Ask for a Champion in DWP/JCP with direct contact detail



Adobe Acrobat
Document

** Trafford- DWP Joint Working Protocol

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8. Apprenticeships in Calderdale

Name of New Belongings LA: Calderdale Council

Subject tackled: Apprenticeships

Rationale

Calderdale's Strategy for Children Looked After gives priority to supporting young people into education, employment and training. The Care Leaver Pledge and the Council's Corporate Parenting Panel ensure the New Belongings Project Plan has a high profile and is progressed corporately.

Link to [Calderdale's Care Leavers Pledge](#)

A survey, to inform the New Belongings Project in Calderdale, of 40 young people accessing our care leaver service aged between 15 ½ to 25 years told us that some of the worst things about leaving care were unemployment, job seeking, boredom and lack of support. The same survey results told us the best way to support young people would be guidance, job seeking help and support and opportunities for experience.

Ofsted identified this as an area requiring improvement in a recent inspection. Previous approaches of guaranteeing this group of young people an interview had not opened up sufficient opportunities for them.

What did the LA do?

As part of our role as Corporate Parents, we developed and provided apprenticeship and work placement opportunities for children looked after and care leavers. We have achieved this by:

- requesting all service areas to participate in this strategy;
- clarifying with young people the support required;
- having an agreed strategy to ensure staff and the young people are aware of what support they can expect; and
- offering all apprentices a mentor from within the local authority.

The pre-apprenticeship programme for young people interested in an apprenticeship but who may not be 'work ready' enables the development of skills and confidence to provide the best support to access this opportunity. The programme covers CV building, applying for apprenticeships and jobs, interview preparation, employer expectations and expectations of

employees. Once the young person has completed the pre-apprenticeship programme, they are supported in applying for apprenticeships and offered additional support if they would like it.

Challenges

- Communication between teams and managers to ensure relevant support for young people
- Managing expectations of young people, services and staff
- Young people not being 'work ready' at the initial stages of the apprenticeship

Impact

"I feel my apprenticeship is going very well. I have had plenty of support in place to help me get on. I find the college work easy to fit in around my job as I take Friday afternoons to do this and don't feel too overwhelmed by the workload. I am still really enjoying work and have learnt so much in my 6 months of being here. I still have lots to learn and love that I'm always being given new tasks to complete so doesn't get too bored doing the same thing every day!" KH

We have an increased number of care leavers contacting the service to enquire about the apprenticeship opportunities that we are now able to offer. This influence has been from the care leaver apprentices we have.

From the initial 10 ring fenced apprenticeships we still have 10 young people in their apprenticeships, this has reduced our NEET (not in employment, education or training) figures.

Sustainability

Our apprenticeship scheme offers a fantastic chance to develop a range of work-based skills whilst earning the national minimum wage and gaining a nationally recognised qualification. In order to meet the changing needs of the organisation we are happy to announce that from January 2016 we will be recruiting on a bi-monthly basis.

When new apprenticeship opportunities within the local authority are available, the New Belongings Project receives first viewing. If any of the apprenticeships are suitable for our Care Leavers we will request that the apprenticeship be ring fenced for Care Leavers.

Top tips

- Believe in your corporate children and their abilities
- Approach corporate parents
- Approach senior managers
- Have a broad selection of apprenticeships at different levels

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9. Employment and Preparation for Employment in Durham

New Belongings Local Authority: Durham

Subject tackled: Employment, Education and Training

Rationale

When we did a survey there were higher levels of EET than expected. A high number of Care leavers wanting to find employment but not being work ready.

What did the LA do?

We now undertake an audit of all education and achievements of every young person in care and continue this when they leave care. Education and work experience, apprenticeships are tailored to their desired choice of career. If on gaining experience they do not like the job, we look again and find a new pathway to follow. We applied for 3 year EU funding as part of a larger youth employment initiative for Durham with a significant portion earmarked for care leavers.

Durham worked in partnership with the Adult Learning and Skills service to assess need and what could be done especially for the hard to reach cohort of young people who have offended, teenage parents, young people with special needs and disability. We identified that traineeships would initially be more effective for these young people entering the workplace. We developed a bespoke traineeship and obtained funding through the EU.

Challenges

- Many of our care leavers lead chaotic lives which does not leave room for the routines and demands of work and education. We need to reduce this and train them in what work or courses involve before they undertake any form of work or education.
- There are often mental health issues still requiring support.
- There is a benefit gap which we are working on and we also learnt that the teenage parents have different needs, Part time work in particular. Transport and child care need to be subsidised.

Impact

So far nine trainees have come through the process who are now work ready; 2 were teenage mums. Most of the nine worked within the County Council. With the help of the new European Social Fund (ESF) funded Youth Employment Initiative we now have three dedicated careers

workers who are working alongside the trainees and our care leavers to ensure they are accessing apprenticeships or employment. These young people will for the first time have the opportunity to earn money and come off benefits. This is setting precedents for the other care leavers who follow this model.

Sustainability

One of the apprentices is leading the Care Leavers Forum and will keep EET in their awareness. The Corporate Parents Board has signed up to the New Belongings approach and are looking at ways to further develop and support the New Belongings action plan such as subsidising transport, providing leisure passes and places to meet which will enhance the lives of our young people and reduce isolation and mental health issues which often stop young people from succeeding in education and work.

The newly appointed Chief Executive has made the offer of a work opportunity for every care leaver both within the Authority and the wider community.

Top tips

- Apply for external funding and engage other involved agencies in a joint initiative.
- Get your CEO to invite local businesses to offer training and apprenticeships, but first ensure that every young person is adequately educated and work ready and has on the job support so that this is a positive learning experience. We were offered more than we had young people ready to take up after one breakfast meeting.
- Engage your care leavers in decisions, particularly through care leaver forums when deciding strategy.

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Having Good Health and Well Being

10. Mental Health in Staffordshire

New Belongings Local Authority: Staffordshire

Subject Tackled: Health and Mental Health

Rationale

Many young people have left care without a mental health diagnosis, but are emotionally vulnerable. Without diagnosis or crisis, many have been denied access to local adult specialist services. A catch22 exists for some young people who leave care before they are ready for independent living. They are unable to maintain a tenancy and in some instances are declared 'intentionally homeless'. As noted by Staffordshire, many young people are turned away from receiving mental health services on the basis of not meeting criteria, but some are also turned away, or deferred, as until they are in a stable environment it is ill-advised to begin therapy. In recent New Belongings Care Leaver Forums, the issue of language around mental health was discussed; it is natural to respond to trauma and chaos negatively, and we should not need labels in order to provide support.

What did the LA do?

In April 2015 as a response to this, the Staffordshire Throughcare team extended the Sustain service already offered to LAC. Funded by the social services but delivered by the Health Department, the team includes Psychologists, Therapists, Social Workers and 'Looked After' Nurses, allowing for holistic assessments. The Sustain+ team offers Tier 3 specialist therapeutic services for care leavers who don't qualify for other adult mental health services through their diagnosis criteria. The key criteria for Sustain+ is that there must be a significant emotional health factor impacting the young persons' life.

Sustain+ also communicate with and signpost to other organizations, tiers and teams. Referral paths and escalations are managed by the team on a case by case basis, using a *care planning* approach. Sustain+ is an unlimited resource to care leavers 18-25, who can use the service multiple times at various support levels and can refer themselves (via form) as well as through their PA or carer. The access process may happen as a simple continuation of established support, or involve a new referral. The core services are:

- direct assessment and asset based care planning of Care Leavers who are referred to the service with emotional and psychological difficulties;
- the delivery of direct and evidence-based therapeutic interventions for Care Leavers presenting with a range of issues;
- urgent (24-48 hour) response to referrals or information received relating to a Care Leaver where a serious risk of harm as a result of emotional/psychological issues has been identified; and
- access to structured and non-structured sessions offering advice and guidance on emotional and psychological health and wellbeing for Care Leavers.

Following referral, the procedure involves a Sustain+ Clinician carrying out an initial assessment of the care leavers' needs, in a multi-disciplinary meeting which takes place with the young person, their carers or guardians, and their PA. Following this, the Sustain+ team communicates with PAs, mentors and guardians before they make an offer or signpost, so that Sustain+ do not duplicate the support they already receive.

Initial consultations are carried out centrally, with follow up services delivered locally to the young person.

The co-ordination of pathways for young people is the responsibility of Sustain+ and Families First/Children's Services, who are involved in the referral process, offering recommendations and challenging decisions. The progress made and services received by a care leaver is monitored by their PA, who communicates with Sustain+. The monitoring of outcomes is a joint effort by the PAs and the Sustain+ team.

Challenges

- If they are still in need of support at 25 they return to the lack of resources in specialist adult mental health services - a focus for the work with these young people must then be towards building resilience and coping skills in managing their own wellbeing and learning to care for themselves
- Monitoring is challenging as care is designed to be long-term and so outcomes are long-term too, and there is no equivalent model of the strengths and difficulties questionnaire for teenagers and adults

- There have been fewer numbers of referrals than anticipated and reasons/solutions are unclear
- Logistical planning around delivering services to care leavers in the same building as LAC and young children, particularly when the care leaver is working through issues involving risky sexual behaviour
- It is easier to monitor care leavers who still live with guardians or carers than those who are isolated

Impact

A few care leavers have been referred, from which there has been some positive anecdotal feedback; but there is no evidence yet on the number of service users or outcomes. There seems to be a lack in numbers of referrals and care leavers using the service, which is to be addressed at the next meeting. The Sustain+ team have begun to provide guidance and support for PAs to assist them in referring and approaching discussion of mental health and wellbeing with care leavers, aiming to move past stigma.

Sustainability

The Sustain+ service is embedded in a health service that already has a holistic approach to wellbeing. The extension of services for care leavers has been introduced along with an extension to adopted children and young people in special guardianships too. The resources for this were found by identifying funds from over-paying for other health services, which leaves a sustainable pot to spend on this extension of services instead. Staffordshire have also made good use of adaptable community volunteers. Monitoring and feedback systems for the continued improvement of services are set up through communication between the Sustain+ and Throughcare teams, particularly PAs, who monitor the outcomes and wellbeing of a young person by using the Pathway Plan as a guide and log. The collaborative way in which the teams work together is also monitored by using the Pathway Plans.

Top tips

- Strive to maintain cohesive support systems by communicating across teams and departments
- Build and maintain working relationships, partnerships, transition protocols and communication with core local children's and adult mental health services across Tiers

1, 2, 3 and 4. This helps to provide a continuity of care when care leavers move from one service to another and enables information sharing

- Be mindful of language and approach when discussing mental health with young people
- Seek consultation and support for those working with the care leavers and monitoring progress
- Focus on building resilience and enabling the care leavers to better care for themselves
- Think about referral pathways and enable care leavers to refer themselves in a way that suits them
- Create a neutral ground with no objectives, labels or stigma in which a conversation can flow

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11. CAMHS Service for 16-25 year olds Care Leavers in Stockport

New Belongings Local Authority: Stockport

Subject tackled: Mental Health Practitioner for Care Leavers and Vulnerable Adults

Rationale

The aim is to have a dedicated mental health practitioner working alongside leaving care personal advisers to take mental health support to young people in their communities, with pathways into healthy young minds (i.e. CAMHS) and adult mental health to provide accessible, timely emotional wellbeing and mental health support to care leavers aged 16-25 yrs.

What did the LA do?

It scoped a business case with health colleagues and healthy young minds (CAMHS) and presented to and met with colleagues in the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) for agreement to funding.

Challenges

Time the discussions have taken to deliver the resource and outcomes to care leavers. We are now in recruitment processes and expect to fill the post by Autumn

Impact

The impact expected is to be able to provide accessible, timely assessment and support to care leavers within their community to improve their emotional wellbeing and mental health. We are reviewing the use of the SDQ 18+ with care leavers as a measurement tool to complement assessment tools and interventions.

Sustainability

Funding is agreed from CCG

Top tips

- Be clear about need and business case with health colleagues and outcomes

- Liaise with CCG commissioners and explore areas for joint commissioning for shared aims and outcomes

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Being in Safe and Settled Accommodation

12. Approach to Homelessness and Housing in Durham

New Belongings Local Authority: Durham

Subject tackled: Approach to Homelessness and Housing in Durham (Improving planning for housing needs for Care Leavers)

Rationale

A survey of the provision of accommodation in Durham for care leavers 10 years ago showed that planning for their housing needs was left far too late and did not meet the needs of young people leaving care.

What did the LA do?

A Care Leaver Accommodation Support Protocol (CLASP) was implemented for each care leaver at the age of 16. This was based on suitable housing that care leavers wanted. Agreement was obtained from the Housing board that Care leavers would be given a priority banding.

Housing has been planned and provided through a number of different options. There are crash pads which are provided by the Holistic Temporary Accommodation and Support Service (HTASS, a jointly funded service by Housing and Children's & Adult Services. A range of options included Staying Put within foster care placement, Supported Lodgings or other supported accommodation provision. The services can be mainstream supported accommodation or commissioned bespoke packages of accommodation and support to meet individual needs up to age 25. The service also has a Supported Lodgings Scheme (with 30 beds), providing planned and unplanned emergency placements. The unplanned emergency placements last for a maximum of 3 weeks, while alternative longer term accommodation is sought.

Durham's aim is to avoid the use of bed and breakfast accommodation by working closely with HTASS, Supported Lodgings and other supported accommodation providers to offer emergency accommodation placements. (In rare and complex cases, an offer of accommodation for two days at Premier Inns can be used).

Challenges

Care leavers facing problems when they have moved to living independently.

Impact

For care leavers who faced real problems the authority began to develop a non-eviction/placement stability policy for young people in supported accommodation, with the aim of maintaining them in placement, providing as much support as needed to cope with the issues, including staff living in the accommodation with young people.

HTASS was specifically commissioned to provide temporary accommodation and crash pads along with support from Housing and Children's Services. Care leavers are able to remain in HTASS accommodation for up to 14 weeks, while alternative accommodation is explored. This could be their own tenancy, depending on the age, or a placement within supported accommodation. Supported accommodation is for a maximum of 2 years but is often less than this, depending on the needs of the young person. If the housing option does not work out, a young person can come back into the service and be offered another option.

We have a zero homelessness joint protocol for all people within Durham and all services work together to ensure that they know what to do and what is available each time a person loses their accommodation.

Sustainability

Planning and support options for care leavers have been developed and form part of the package offered to young people in care and leaving care. Being part of a well utilised joint working initiative no one falls through the cracks and ends up on the streets through lack of communication or scarce resources. No one is placed, even short term, where they would be at risk as all agencies share and sign up to the risk assessments for this client group.

Top tips

Care leavers must be included at all stages of planning for their future. Their accommodation needs must reflect their skills to live independently.

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13. Accommodation Support in Devon

Name of New Belongings Local Authority: Devon

Subject tackled: Accommodation

The county has two tiers of local council and district council accommodation providers, which has made gaining accommodation particularly difficult for care leavers.

There was provision for the Local Authority to support young people who were in university in accommodation for the holidays but not during the term.

Rationale

Young people said securing accommodation was one of their greatest difficulties due to not having a parent who could be a guarantor. This need was seen particularly with young people in university. The first year in halls was achievable but joining their friends in houses in the subsequent years was not available to them. The options for securing accommodation during their course and afterwards were significantly limited.

What did the LA do?

The Local Authority re-examined its policy regarding benefits and protocols with the housing agencies. It ensured the homeless policy for 16+ was known across the children and adult services and particularly the housing providers.

The 'Participation Team', which is staffed by 'care leavers', presented the housing issue to the chief executive of Devon County Council with the support of New Belongings and gained agreement.

The participation team has devised a risk assessment for staff to use and the policy has been updated. Young people and new belongings have been central to ensuring that this need is met.

Challenges

- The financial liability to the Local Authority
- The difficulties in amalgamating the different policies
- The identification of need amongst care leavers



- The risk assessment needed to ensure that young people are aware of their responsibilities
- The different types of tenancy and what happens when a young person is not designated a 'care leaver'? How do you stop the landlord evicting the young person once the LA stops being guarantor?

Impact

- A young person fighting for over 6 months to gain a tenancy has been able to gain one
- Young people going to university will now be able to gain accommodation, equal to their peers in the second and subsequent years. This had previously been a barrier.
- More young people will have a greater choice of accommodation and enabled to gain a tenancy on merit

Sustainability (How will the work embed in LA and carry on after NB finished?)

This is a new policy which will need to be embedded. The learning and risks will be ongoing but the commitment to the policy has been given by the Chief executive for it to continue.

This is now part of the Local Authority agreement with young people. If young people are able to provide evidence that they are mature and can sustain a tenancy, they will be given the opportunity.

Top tips

You will need to gain strategic management agreement, many of whom will have experienced this with their own children; so make it personal to their experience.

Get care leavers involved

Any comments by care leaver editor

We are happy we have made a difference

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Having an Adequate Level of Income

14. Incentivizing Care Leavers: Dealing with Council Tax in North Somerset

New Belongings Local Authority: North Somerset

Subject tackled: Incentivising care leavers into taking apprenticeships and lower paid jobs by easing financial burdens

Rationale

Care leavers in North Somerset have consistently said to the Authority that it is extremely difficult for them to transition from being in education or on benefits into living independently on their first, often very low wage. Council tax was identified, through care leaver surveys and other feedback, as a particularly challenging bill for them to pay at this critical stage of their lives.

As a tax levied directly by the Council on local households/individuals, North Somerset took the view that it had the authority and discretion to create some relief for care leavers in terms of their commitments in this area. The rationale adopted, after internal exploration and testing, was that it did not make sense incurring debt recovery costs in pursuing council tax arrears which care leavers could not afford to pay. Moreover, as the corporate parent, it had an obligation to help care leavers meet their council tax commitments in the same way that parents or guardians might be expected to offer their children financial support in a similar situation.

What did the LA do?

Through discussions within the Care Leavers Forum, and the LA more generally, a draft policy was developed which would have the effect of providing financial support to care leavers in terms of meeting their council tax commitments, but in a manner which was manifestly fair and proportionate. In this regard, it was recognised as important not to exempt care leavers from council tax, given the difficult precedent this would be likely to set (i.e. other vulnerable and equally deserving groups would undoubtedly lobby for similar treatment on a justifiable basis). The challenge was therefore to formulate a transparent policy which did no more than provide a level of financial support to care leavers, in the Council's role as corporate parent, which was little different from the support that parents or guardians might provide to their own children in similar circumstances.

Against this background, a policy was devised which involved North Somerset meeting the costs of council tax liabilities for those care leavers aged between 18 and 21, living independently and either unemployed or in apprenticeships or entry level jobs, in order to help manage their transition from education through to becoming financially independent.

Challenges

- Devising a policy that provided an appropriate level of financial support to care leavers at a particularly difficult time in their lives, which would be widely accepted as fair and proportionate, and not setting an extendable precedent in the eyes of other vulnerable and deserving groups (hence ruling out the possibility of granting an exemption);
- Obtaining buy-in to the proposed policy from the Council's senior team at both an executive and political level (although the Council's strong, joined up leadership and commitment to its corporate parent responsibilities, made this less of a challenge in North Somerset than it might otherwise have been).

Impact

The council tax initiative is part of a three step approach developed by North Somerset to help support care leavers transitioning into employment. The package of support (including the council tax element) is not due to be fully implemented until April 2016, and it is therefore too early at this stage to judge or predict the likely impact of the council tax aspect in isolation. However, the initiative has been seen as innovative and extremely promising. The potential to help incentivise the take up of apprenticeships and entry level jobs, as part of the three step approach, is therefore considered to be high.

Sustainability

The initiative will be carefully reviewed and evaluated by the Council and, if successful, embedded into its wider business plans.

Top tips

- It is important that an initiative of this nature is fully supported by the CEO and political leadership before preparatory work begins and care leaver expectations are raised;
- Ensure that support with council tax payments forms part of a wider, structured programme of work aimed at incentivising the take up of apprenticeships and entry level work



- Ensure that care leavers are fully involved in the development of the policy once “in principle” senior leadership buy-in has been secured.

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15. Assistance to Care Leavers – Emergency and Leaving Care Grants in Trafford

New Belongings Local Authority: Trafford Council

Subject tackled: Assistance being offered to care leavers – emergency and leaving care grants

Rationale

A number of care leavers raised with managers and at the Corporate Parenting Board the following issues:

1. It was often difficult for them to get to the main office when there was an emergency and was there any way that the care leaving service could provide them with cash more quickly at a time of emergency?
2. The leaving care grant gave them limited options in terms of spending to get good value for money and was rather bureaucratic i.e. that they could only have a certain amount of cash and had to provide receipts before more cash could be provided.

What did the LA do?

Managers were asked explore two things:

1. whether a similar direct payments scheme could be used for care leaver as is used for adults; and
2. what would be the simplest way to provide the leaving care grants to young people so that it could be spent effectively.

The conclusion was that pre-payment cards could be provided to care leavers using the same system used for direct payments to adults. Care leavers were consulted about the type of card. The card was issued to all care leavers 16+.

The card can be topped up by the care leaving service remotely at any time after a request from a care leaver for a top-up has been assessed – typically within ten minutes. Care leavers use it through a “hole in the wall”. This approach has worked very well for young people in crisis.

The level of bureaucracy in paying leaving care grants has been reduced saving administration costs and enabling more effective spending by the care leavers. Care leavers can now request an amount and, after an assessment, the monies can be made available through the pre-payment card.

Challenges

None

Impact (Is there evidence of the difference this has made?)

1. Easy access to emergency assistance.
2. Accessible leaving care grants
3. Better spending power for care leavers

Sustainability

This system and approach will remain in place.

Top tips (bullet points aimed at other LA who may wish to replicate/try this approach)

1. Use your existing payment cards supplier
2. Consult with care leavers around the type of card

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Having People to Count on for Emotional Support

16. Mentoring and the Pure Insight Mentoring Scheme in Stockport

Name of New Belongings Local Authority: Stockport Council (in partnership with Pure Insight)

Subject tackled - Mentoring (Summary, please see PDF below for the extended version with further details)

Rationale

Through consultation with care leavers and social care staff, loneliness and isolation was identified as a major barrier to care leavers successfully transitioning to independence. Many had limited access to a consistent adult who could be reached quickly in times of need, or to be there in times of celebration. Pure Insight responded with a broad as well as robust provision that rests on the belief that young people who do not have families are the responsibility of the whole community. Statutory services alone cannot meet all the needs of a young person; we need to include the local community.

What did the LA do?

Initially, having recognised the impact of Pure Insight's Mentoring programme in 2013, Stockport Council (SMBC) funded a part time Mentoring coordinator post in late 2013. Based on the positive outcomes achieved, they then funded a full time mentoring coordinator from April 2014. Pure Insight fund the recruitment, training, expenses and support of volunteer mentors through community fundraising and partnership building. The service is open to Care Leavers age 16-28 years by referral from the local authority, local partners or self-referral. Pure Insight works closely with SMBC to meet common objectives, but retains autonomy over the delivery model. In response to feedback from care leavers, SMBC also restructured its 16+ services to build in a team of intensive support workers to work flexibly with care leavers in transition or at times of crisis, including evenings and weekends.

The programme was developed by care leavers for care leavers and uses a volunteer-based approach in response to care leavers expressing that having a volunteer mentor as opposed to a paid member of staff automatically made them feel like they mattered. Volunteers are recruited from the local community then assessed and trained through a ten week programme before being matched to a young care leaver. Mentors are asked to commit to a minimum of 2 years, and many opt to stay in touch. Mentors are able to focus specifically on one young

person and provide a flexible, responsive and preventative approach to young people facing challenges, and are contactable in everyday ways. Mentors can access support as and when needed, including out of hours, alongside a regular 1:1, group support, and a social media support group. Care leavers lead in how their progress is assessed.

Challenges

Different cultures and approaches; Confidentiality; Demonstrate outcomes vs. develop relationships

Impact

Pure Insight provide strong anecdotal evidence of positive outcomes for care leavers with mentors

Sustainability

Stockport Council's contract with Pure Insight is reviewed annually; a support network of mentors

Top tips

Use a third sector organisation led by those with care experience and has previously worked well with young people classed as "hard to reach"; Matching is the most important part, take time over this; provide opportunities for those delivering the project to engage with ALL your care leavers

Annex: * Extended Description of Pure Insight Mentoring Scheme in Stockport



Adobe Acrobat
Document

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17. Safe Space/Hub for Care Leavers in North Somerset

New Belongings Local Authority: North Somerset

Subject tackled: Creating a safe space for care leavers (and children in care) in a supportive environment where essential services and activities can be readily accessed at sensible times

Rationale

The provision of a safe space or hub was prompted by a mix of care leaver feedback and LA analysis of the need for a discrete area where care leavers and those still in care could meet, interact, provide and obtain mutual support and have access to essential information and services in a friendly “one stop shop” environment. The initiative was designed to overcome a problem where care leavers reported feeling isolated and neglected, and intimidated by a traditional support network which they didn’t fully understand and considered largely inaccessible because of the complex, bureaucratic practices and procedures which applied.

What did the LA do?

North Somerset identified a suitable unused space within its Town Hall in Weston-Super-Mare, and engaged the Care Leavers Forum to agree, design and re-furbish the area based on an assessment of its own needs and wishes. The Council allocated a budget of £2000 to the Forum for this purpose. A separate side entrance (with a dedicated pin code) was created for the sole use of those accessing the facility in order to give it a truly self-contained character, and obviate the hassle of entering via the main Town Hall entrance and having to obtain passes from reception. In providing a self-contained space of this nature, and delegating responsibility for design and refurbishment to the Care Leavers Forum, the Council ensured that those using the facility felt a strong sense of ownership and pride.

The facility, which was opened in November 2015, is bright, airy and welcoming and has modern, fully equipped lounge, kitchen and dining areas with facilities for child care. It also has dedicated internet/Wi-Fi facilities and convenient access to both on-site and visiting service support staff (covering education, health, housing etc.).

Challenges

- Identifying, configuring and refurbishing suitable accommodation, and determining opening hours which would ensure optimum utilisation;
- Ensuring that essential support services (e.g. education, health, housing etc.) would be “joined up” and readily available to those using the facility;



- Ensuring that the leadership of the Care Leavers Forum was sufficiently strong and robust to take on the responsibility of design and refurbishment in an effective, timely and democratic fashion.

Impact

The new space has been open for less than three months, but is already being extremely well utilised. Although too early to judge or evaluate the full impact of the initiative, it is already clear from informal feedback that interaction and communication, both within and between the service user and provider communities, has improved since the facility was opened.

Sustainability

The Council and the Care Leavers Forum have invested considerable capital in this initiative, and are both determined to ensure its success and longevity. The Council takes its corporate parenting responsibilities very seriously, and is committed to embedding this and other similar initiatives into its long term business plans, suitably adjusted to take account of lessons learned from ongoing review and evaluation.

Top tips

- Fully engage the Care Leavers Forum from the outset, and ensure that they are given significant input into determining the nature and location of the hub, and a high degree of autonomy over design and refurbishment issues. This will help instil a strong sense of ownership and pride amongst the users of the facility
- Take care to ensure that it will be possible to deliver a truly accessible and joined up set of services on site at times convenient to the care leavers. Success will be judged as much on the effectiveness of service provision as the quality of the facility provided (and probably more so).

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18. Personal Advisers: A Duty to age 25 in Trafford

New Belongings Local Authority: Trafford Council

Subject Tackled: Personal Advisers - A Duty to 25yrs for all Returners regardless of education, employment and Training (EET) Status

Rationale

In January 2015 the DfE published Volume 3 of the Care Planning Guidance Planning for The Transition of Care leavers to Adulthood. The guidance included a new statutory requirement for local authorities to provide a leaving care service to care leavers, up to the age of 25years old, who inform their local authority that they have returned (or want to return) to education, training or employment. Prior to this new initiative, local authorities were required to support care leavers only up to 21years or 25 years if they were attending university.

Trafford are compliant with all current regulatory and statutory duties and the leaving care team are meeting the needs of those care leavers aged up to 25yrs who have returned, or want to return, to education or training or employment.

However, there is an emerging view both nationally and locally that continuous support from a personal adviser should be provided to all care leavers up to the age of 25yr regardless of the reason for returning for a service. This view has been driven forward by a best practice approach and has been integrated into the New Belongings agenda which Trafford is the lead in the North West. It is also the case that the Government may in the near future make this a statutory duty.

Trafford Council has stated to the DfE and New Belongings Project that it is extending an offer to all care leavers up to 25yrs. Trafford is the first in the country to formally extend support to all care leavers and believe that we should be supporting our care leavers from the top learners to the young people that just need a bit more support to achieve.

What did the LA do?

The new offer to care leavers was presented to the senior management team and the Corporate Parenting Board for discussion and approval.

Trafford have been informing care leavers at their last Pathway Plan review they can return for a service up to the age of 25 regardless of their EET position.

The service that is offered to care leavers has been updated in the financial guide that is sent to all young people in care.

Challenges

- The main challenge will be an increase in demand for a service from care leavers post 21yrs. It is estimated that around 30% to 50% of a local authority's NEET cohort could return for a service. This figure is an estimate and could be higher as this will depend on the leaving care offer to all care leavers from 16yrs old. The better the service to care leavers when they leave care originally the less the likelihood of care leavers returning after 21. That should include good adult transitions via health and emotional health, EET opportunities, good multi-agency pathway planning and a dogged approach by personal advisers. So far the number of Personal Advisers has been increased by one because of an increase in the number of care leavers needing services.
- Another challenge will be resources allocated to assist young people in particular crisis. This could range from financial assistance due to benefit issues or in some cases housing debt costs or re-housing issues.

Impact

It is too early to assess the impact and the offer will need a joined up approach by all partner agencies to get maximum impact. The impact should reflect the effect of a good parent giving some continued support to their children and builds on the lifelong champion notion in the Care Leavers Charter. The outcomes should be seen in fewer care leavers who are homeless, in prison, admitted to mental health units and alcohol and drug dependency units giving significant savings to the taxpayer.

Sustainability

Trafford will continue to provide this support. It is likely that the PA Duty will be tabled in forthcoming legislation and LA's will have an additional duty placed on them.

Top tips

- Introduce the offer now in preparation to it becoming legislation.
- Ensure service provision to manage the transition from care earlier is as effective as possible.

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Being Able to Manage Day to Day Life

19. Preparation for Leaving Care in Staffordshire

Name of New Belongings Local Authority: Staffordshire

Subject tackled: Preparation for Leaving Care

Rationale

Through consultation with care leavers and accommodation providers, it has been identified that placement breakdowns are frequent for young people living in supported and independent accommodation. Many young people are not ready to hold down their own tenancy. Staffordshire use a CD-ROM distributed nationally by NCAS about preparation for independence, but have found that many young people do not have access to the right technology or dislike it, so whilst it works well for some it does not meet everyone's needs. Through participating in New Belongings and the National Care Leavers Benchmarking Forum (Catch22), Staffordshire found other LAs are making good use of training flats, and through Care Leavers Forums have found there is a postcode lottery across the county in terms of the service provided for preparing young people for adulthood and leaving care.

What did the LA do?

A workshop morning was hosted by Staffordshire (bringing together care leavers, foster carers, various council staff members, and accommodation providers) with the aim of looking towards providing a consistently good quality service. Staffordshire is now beginning to tackle the bigger project of deciding on, designing and disseminating a preparation for leaving care practice; a minimum requirement of provisions for young people across all boroughs of Staffordshire. Areas and organizations are in the process of sending details about the schemes they currently have in place to the Staffordshire hub for review. Staffordshire are also in the process of putting together a bid to the Innovation Fund in order to fund a supported training flat with a local accommodation provider.

The workshop was overwhelmingly well attended, and brought several discussion points to light:

- Young people have identified that they do not want to attend classes and programmes about how to live, they want the training to be part of their living environment, delivered by those they live with.
- A foster carer and social worker had worked together to deliver cookery classes for care leavers.



- It was paramount to ensure stable accommodation; without it not much else can be done. It was said to be less about finding stable accommodation at 18, and more about finding stable accommodation much earlier than that to give a young person a real foundation. There is evidence that the young people in the Staying Put scheme in Staffordshire have positive outcomes. It was also discussed that those who do not have the option of 'Staying Put' are at a disadvantage.
- There are two parts to preparing for leaving care. Preparation for independence comes much earlier in foster care through things like learning to budget pocket money, picking out clothes and using a washing machine. Then there is another type of preparation for independence from age 16/17 where the pre-tenancy work begins - addressing what needs to be done to hold down a tenancy and what puts it at risk. The preparation is two-fold: there is the basics of keeping a home, and there is the preparation for living alone. Part of it is ongoing and carried out at home in foster care, and part of it is specific to the LA's input.

Challenges

- Training flats have been a challenge for Staffordshire in the past due to location, the size of the county, and it being impractical for the majority of young people to live their lives whilst using it
- Training flats also require year-round maintenance, preparation and cleaning between placements, and in-house support for young people staying there - as PAs cannot commit the necessary time
- There is inconsistency in the way foster carers prepare young people for adulthood and communication between personal advisers and foster carers needs to be improved
- When classes are held by Staffordshire, young people won't attend as Stafford is miles from home; if classes are held they need to be in the local areas of the young people
- Commercial accommodation and independent fostering agencies cannot be given demands on the in-house way of operating. They have their own schemes and tools in place. These organizations are not obligated to provide service; working with them whilst providing consistent services will require compromise.

Impact

Initial contact and consultation has been well received. Impact, actions and outcomes are pending.

Sustainability

Once methodologies and practices are agreed there will be a launch and/or a series of training sessions. This will embed the improving 'preparation for leaving care' practices into the Staffordshire foster care training. Communication will remain open, particularly whilst finding potential compromises with commercial accommodation providers and independent fostering agencies. Regardless of the Innovation bid outcome, a training flat will be set up with a supported accommodation provider and is a high priority. In the weeks following the workshop, an experienced care leaver ambassador has been recruited to lead the project from May through to September.

Top tips

Top tips for organizing a workshop and beginning a similar process:

- Prepare the ground work with agencies, foster carers, social workers, supported accommodation providers individually first and inspire a sense of passion and urgency for resolving these issues
- Bring people on the journey - invite all stakeholders, including care leavers, to be part of the conversation throughout the process (as opposed to making decisions and telling them what to do)
- Short talks or discussion points during meetings and forums to engage the organizations and carers

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Services Used by More Vulnerable Care Leavers

20. Advice to Personal Advisers working with Care Leavers who have been Asylum Seeking Children

New Belongings Local Authority:

Subject tackled: Advising Personal Advisers working with Care Leavers who have been Asylum Seeking Children

Rationale

Working with care leavers whose immigration status is not decided by the age of 18 is more challenging – both for the care leaver and the Personal Adviser. This note, written from the viewpoint of an asylum seeking care leaver, outlines some approaches that can help the Personal Adviser and the care leaver. The personal view of the care leaver is given.

Sensitivities

The situation of the care leaver is different for several reasons:

- there is the uncertainty of their future status and whether they will be granted leave to remain or may face deportation. There is also great uncertainty about the timing of any decision. Those extreme uncertainties must be acknowledged. Since the timing is uncertain their life cannot be “put on hold” while awaiting a decision or opportunities for them will be wasted;
- some avenues or support available to care leavers may be closed off to them – for example, they may not be able to be in employment. That puts a premium on pursuing those opportunities that can be available;
- the care leaver may fear being returned to their country of birth. The question of making contact with the birth family has to be approached sensitively, recognizing that the discussion of that issue can only be founded on trust and may take time. Attitudes to that possibility will vary greatly;
- the Personal Adviser is seen as an official working for the government. That may be associated with a belief that therefore the Adviser will be working closely with immigration officials and a degree of caution about the nature of the relationship which could take time to establish.



Approaches

The role of being the corporate parent is even more important for a care leaver who may not have any family ties in the UK. Getting an understanding of that role is even more important in building the relationship with the care leaver and in being clear that the role is not that of a state official with the same aim as immigration officials and the Home Office.

The care leaver's level of concern about current or future immigration status is likely to be very high and can prevent engagement with other key issues in leaving care such as accommodation or education. The PA should aim to reduce the level of uncertainty by making sure that they have access to a solicitor to progress their case. The PA may also need to contact the Home Office to establish the stage of decision-making that has been reached and likely timing of any decision.

There will be – as for any care leaver – a number of short-term issues that concern the care leaver and the Personal Adviser such as accommodation. These may be more complicated because of immigration status and may demand more imagination about the possibilities. For example, employment is likely to be limited so opportunities might be sought in working with charities. Encouragement to improve fluency in English might be included as a skill whatever the future holds. A short-term plan is needed to cover all possibilities for development, also including actions to get information about decisions on immigration status.

A long-term plan is needed too – particularly to address future aspirations. Uncertainty about future immigration status must not prevent a plan about a future career in the UK and the options should be as wide as possible, including further and higher education.⁵ This is crucial both because education is a realistic option especially if employment opportunities are limited and because that attitude encourages progress in education for those still in the education system. Actions that will contribute to long-term aspirations are just as necessary if decisions on immigration status are not consistent with remaining in the UK.

Any of these approaches will work better if there is true empathy for the particularly difficult position of a care leaver uncertain about their future ability to remain in this country and the significance of the role of the corporate parent.

⁵ If enacted, changes in the Immigration Bill 2015 will restrict the support available to former unaccompanied asylum seeking children (UASC) aged over 18, whose appeal rights have been exhausted.



21. Teenaged Pregnancy Support in Durham

New Belongings Local Authority: Durham

Subject tackled: Teenage pregnancy

Rationale

This is an area of growing concern because of the increase in numbers. The older teenage parents were particularly vocal in their needs and feelings of isolation and lack of finance, support and access to the job market.

What did the LA do?

We ensured that care leaver teen parents became a high priority on the teenage pregnancy steering group and accessed finances from public health to focus on them. We identified this area as a key milestone in our plan which helped us focus in on this. There was follow up via the monthly conference call with New Belongings which helped us stay on track. We invited one of the New Belongings panellists with expertise in this area to run a consultation forum in Durham to see what exactly was needed by teenage parents.

Challenges

- Transport costs to social groups, support groups, education and work as Durham is so large and spread out
- Childcare costs
- This group do not all want to work full time and require a different course of work readiness than other care leavers due to their parental responsibilities
- Need more back up at home if issues with child's health arise

Impact

Four of the care leavers have now been on a specialist teen parent programme run by public health. Four have successfully completed the traineeship programme. We are setting up part time work opportunities with paid child care.

Sustainability

- Public Health now treats this group as a priority and will continue to fund initiatives.
- The European Social Fund (ESF) Youth Employment Initiative have identified future employment programmes for this group of care leavers
- School nurses are working with looked after young people to highlight the risks of becoming pregnant with specialist Sex and Relationship Education (SRE) programmes.
- Training is being rolled out to the personal advisors.
- Engagement of care leavers in decisions, particularly through care leaver forums
- We aim to set up peer support groups and hopefully have teenage parents talk to looked after young people about their experiences

Top tips

Ensure that you find out what issues are relevant for each young mother. One size does not fit all and they need a bespoke programme and often a lot of support

Contact details for lead at LA

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Glossary of Terms

Access All Areas - Care Leavers' Foundation, NCAS, Princes Trust, ANV, 2012

Access All Areas was a campaign started in 2012 by The Care Leavers' Foundation who enlisted the help of the leading charities NCAS, The Prince's Trust and A National Voice, to bring together a coalition of thirty organisations with an interest in care leavers for the purpose of beginning a coordinated approach from the sector to call on the Government for better 'care proofing' of a wide variety of policy areas. The work of *Access All Areas* is on-going and policy experts from The National Care Advisory Service and the Prince's Trust are continuing the discussions with relevant Departments.

Click this link to read more about *Access All Areas*:

http://www.thecareleaversfoundation.org/All_Areas

Click here to read reports on *Access All Areas*

https://secure.toolkitfiles.co.uk/clients/23786/sitedata/files/Access_All_Areas_Complete.pdf

care leaver – a person who has spent 3 months or more in the statutory care of a Local Authority (LA) at any time as a child but has now reached an age where they are independent, though may still receive some support

care leaver ambassador – a role within an LA filled by a care leaver to link with other care leavers and ensure their views are heard and represented within the LA and the wider community

care leaver apprentice – a care leaver who is on an apprenticeship contract within an LA or with another employer; the apprenticeship role has usually been ring-fenced specifically for someone who has been in care to give them training and the best chance for a future career.

care leaver champion – a person nominated to act as a voice and spokesperson for all care leavers in that geographic area or sector

Care Leaver Forum - is a group of young people who are leaving care or have left care and are brought together to consider the issues affecting care leavers and give advice to the local authorities and its corporate parenting panel.

Charter for Care Leavers - The Charter is a list of promises for central and local government to make to young people moving out of care. The principles in the charter were developed by

young people leaving care. Local authorities that sign up to the Charter promise to meet those principles in providing services to care leavers. Some authorities in the project worked with their care leavers to make these principles specific in relation to the services for care leavers in their local area. Click the link below for the full text of the Charter.

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/264694/Care_leavers_charter.pdf

cluster – a group of LAs who are geographically close and who share what they have found works so as to learn from each other, and sometimes commission services together

virtual cluster – a group of LAs who are not geographically close but who have similar care leaver populations e.g. rural, and who share what they have found works

Critical Friend – A ‘critical friend’ is an important part of the team formed to implement the New Belongings approach and methodology. In the project, the New Belongings team was a “critical friend” to the local authority clusters, explaining the methodology and approach of the project and giving advice as needed. Panel members also provided some training to care leavers, Care Leaver Forum members, and Personal Advisers in some authorities.

List of Abbreviations

DFE- Department for Education; the Government Department with lead responsibility for Looked after Children and Care Leavers

DWP – Department of Work and Pensions; the Government Department responsible for paying most State Welfare Benefits

EET – employment, education or training

ESF - European Social Fund

LA – a Local Authority; a statutory body with responsibilities to run services in a named geographic area. This includes Corporate Parent responsibilities for young Care Leavers

NB – New Belongings

NEET – not in employment, education or training

SRE – Sex and Relationship Education

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Figure 5 – Map of Phase II New Belongings Local Authorities

List of Useful Links and Resources

Access All Areas

[https://secure.toolkitfiles.co.uk/clients/23786/sitedata/files/Access All Areas Complete.pdf](https://secure.toolkitfiles.co.uk/clients/23786/sitedata/files/Access%20All%20Areas%20Complete.pdf)

Charter for Care Leavers

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/care-leavers-charter>

Care Leavers' Strategy One Year On DfE 2014

[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/368235/Care Leavers Strategy update.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/368235/Care_Leavers_Strategy_update.pdf)

New Belongings Project website

<http://newbelongings.org.uk/>

The Care Leavers' Foundation

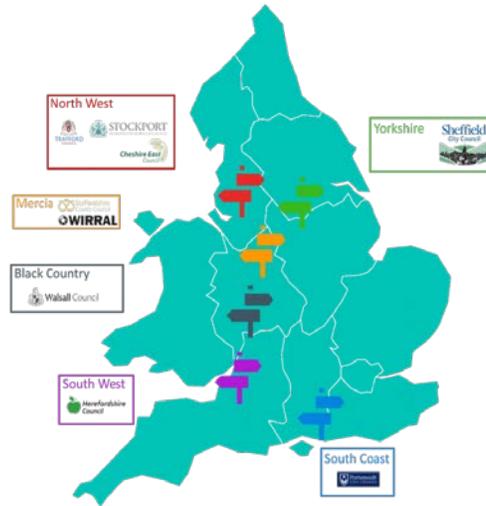
<http://www.thecareleaversfoundation.org/da/124473>

Ofsted 2015 Report on Trafford Council

[http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/local authority reports/trafford/052_Single%20inspection%20of%20LA%20children's%20services%20and%20review%20of%20the%20LSCB%20as%20pdf.pdf](http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/local_authority_reports/trafford/052_Single%20inspection%20of%20LA%20children's%20services%20and%20review%20of%20the%20LSCB%20as%20pdf.pdf)

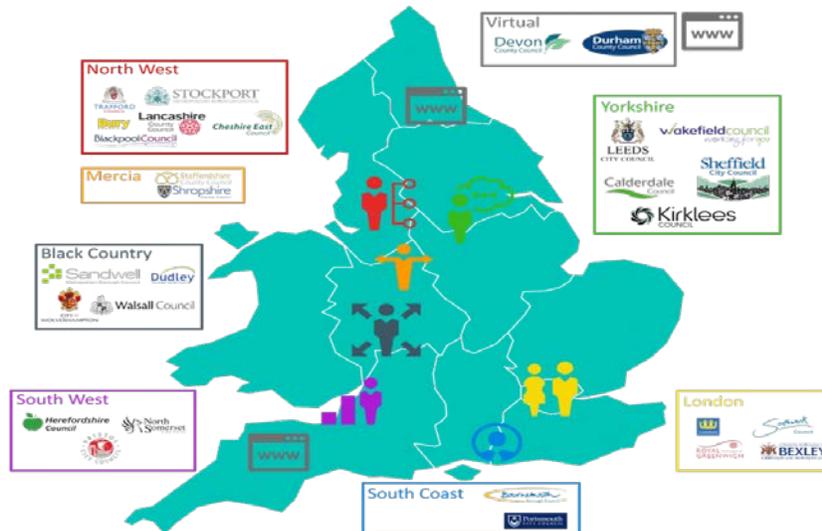
New Belongings Project Local Authorities

Figure 4 – Map of Phase I New Belongings Local Authorities



To find out more about phase 1, please click the Map or this link: <http://newbelongings.org.uk/new-belongings-project/project-history>

Figure 5: Map of Phase II New Belongings Local Authorities



To find out more about phase 1, please click the Map or this link: <http://newbelongings.org.uk/new-belongings-project/project-history>

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- Everyone else who has been involved in bringing the New Belongings project to life

New Belongings Project and Contact Information

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